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**WOLFGANG GOETHE**



# **WOLFGANG GOETHE**

**BY**

**GEORG BRANDES**

*Authorized Translation From the Danish*

**BY**

**ALLEN W. PORTERFIELD**

**VOLUME I**

**FRANK-MAURICE, INC.**

**NEW YORK**

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PRINTED IN U. S. A.

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE first draft of this translation was made at Copenhagen between November 1, 1916, and May 1, 1917. The second edition of "Wolfgang Goethe" had appeared just before my arrival in Denmark in September, 1916. At Dr. Brandes's own request, this and not the first or unrevised edition was translated. The contract with the author was signed at his home, 27 Strandboulevard, Copenhagen, on March 29, 1917. While the translation was in progress, I corresponded with a number of American publishers who welcomed the idea of bringing out the work in this country and England.

Then came April 6, 1917. From August, 1917, until July, 1919, I was with the colors, in the United States, France, and Germany. During this period the manuscript was shelved awaiting the return to the arts of peace. Then came the backwash from the war. During these years of demobilization, retrospect, and reconstruction, years in which I was attached to the staff of the New York *Evening Post*, the translation was subjected to a complete revision. I made it my avocation, rewriting chapter after chapter, as opportunity offered.

Then came the German translation: 1922. This proved interesting and helpful. The German translators have deleted a number of remarks which were unfavorable; these I have retained. They have added a number of illuminating observations

not found in the Danish; these I have inserted, for they are manifestly emendations by the author. They were obliged, one would think, to go direct to Goethe's German in the matter of quotations. In the majority of instances they have. This has made it easier, for Dr. Brandes is a foe of notes and references. It was, consequently, at times nearly impossible to locate a sentence from Goethe's voluminous works. There were, this being the case, a few passages in my original manuscript which were translations of translations. There are none in this.

The sole changes I have felt at liberty to make have to do with paragraphing, the substitution of sectional divisions for chapter headings (there are one hundred and forty chapters in the original Danish), and the form or type in which the quotations appear. The notes on Scandinavian writers have been added in the belief that they would make the work more easily intelligible to the English-speaking world. My objective, all told, has been nothing more pretentious than to give an accurate and idiomatic reproduction of the biography as it was written. It is not fiction; I have consequently not felt that it was my privilege to lift it up to any great extent. It is science; I have therefore regarded it as my inescapable duty not to let it down at all.

I owe a debt that is not small to Dr. Robert Herndon Fife, Executive Officer of the German Department of Columbia University, who went through the translation and made a number of suggestions of which I have taken full advantage. Miss Virginia Lee Bowen read the proof with what

Goethe himself might have called *ein sonnenhaftes Auge*. My obligation to her for this is real. It also gives me unqualified pleasure merely to indicate the debt I owe my wife, Elsie de V. Porterfield, who did the better half of the mute, inglorious work that went into the Copenhagen draft. Without her reassurance, "Wolfgang Goethe" would never have been translated by me. With her partnership, all this writing, all this translating, recalls such memories as one carries away from intimate association with good literature itself.

A. W. P.

Randolph-Macon Woman's College,  
July 5, 1923.



## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE original feature of this book lies in the fact that, so far as the author knows, it is the first attempt to develop, without regard to the material connection of final and complete achievements, Goethe's personality from the cell up. It bears the same relation to the prevailing treatises on Goethe's life and works that his own treatise on botany bears to that of Linné: there are no rubrics.

This book does not contain a special section on Goethe as a lyric writer, nor does it contain one on Goethe as a naturalist or a dramatist or a philosopher or a manager of a theatre. Nor is there one separate and comprehensive section on *Götz* or *Iphigenie* or *Wilhelm Meister*. And—strange as it may seem—there is no isolated section on *Faust*.

The poetic outlines and fragments are portrayed just as they arise in the poet's fancy. In case they were elaborated or revised, the results are given at the point where they belong in the history of Goethe's development. Scientific conjectures with their corresponding experiments are discussed, each for itself, just as it engaged the investigator's mind, each in that stage of the development of Goethe's mind in which the hypothesis moves from unconscious life to consciousness. There are no rubrics. As with his poetic constructions and creations, his scientific discoveries and hypotheses are also traced

back to the history of his soul and dissolved in psychology.

In other words, the portrayal in this study runs along after the fashion of life itself; or it runs as does the bronze until it becomes plastic in the form of the statue.

There is an intentional omission of easy and everyday *résumés* such as readers are accustomed to and, it would seem, take to with docility. There are no judgments on the man and his deeds which drive the conclusions through and clinch them for all time on the other side. No such plebeian questions as the following are raised: Was Goethe good? Was Goethe religious? Was Goethe national? Was Goethe inspired? Was he a snob? Was he an idealist, or a realist, or a pessimist, or an optimist? Was he warm? Was he cold? Was he philanthropic? Was he misanthropic?

All such questions—questions born of faith in rubrics and definitions and overlooking the fact that the life of a man, and particularly that of a genius, is a changeable, variable affair, rich in all manner of development—are rendered, it is to be hoped, superfluous by a presentation which, through the process of remelting, has dissolved them and deposited the answers in the hot, running stream. And this stream, congealed in time, becomes a plastic whole.

## INTRODUCTION

NOTHING can seem more superfluous than the publication of still another book on Goethe, a great many more having already been written on him than he himself produced with all his diligence. It must be borne in mind, however, that one does not do this for Goethe's sake but for one's own sake: It is done with the idea of assembling the impressions that have come down from a mind studied interest in which has been a lifelong affair.

Goethe was the greatest poet of the last three centuries. But it is not the poet alone in him that fascinates and captivates. For the mere poetic factor in its complete isolation has perchance been somewhat overestimated in our day excluding as it does at times neither mental indigence nor spiritual immaturity and rudeness. It is Goethe as a natural and spiritual force, and as a profoundly human and magnificent personality, that one studies out of necessity and with satisfaction.

His mind had its limitations just as his character had its defects; yet we are justified in calling him the incarnation of humanity at its loftiest. To his mind nothing was foreign. He was more superbly endowed than any of his predecessors for several centuries back; he was more epoch-making than any of his contemporaries; he was more highly gifted than his successors. He was a type and a model by virtue of his many-sidedness and because of the

complete fullness of his nature—a nature that was in itself a combination of pronounced contrasts.

Goethe is among minds what the Pacific Ocean is among the waters of the earth. The peaceful or Pacific Ocean is at once the largest and the deepest. In reality only a small part of it is pacific. To the north and south of this narrow belt the Pacific Ocean is tossed about by local winds and trade winds, it has its currents and its counter currents, its warm streams and its cold. It has earthquake waves, too, which are unlike those of any other great body of water. It is even so with Goethe in that he is the greatest and deepest of creative minds known to modern times. There is also in his life and lifework a broad, peaceful zone while all the rest is quiet and storm, warm streams and cold streams, currents and counter currents, and earthquake waves as well.

Wherever the German language is spoken Goethe enjoys undisputed renown. After a relatively long period, during which he was misunderstood and wrongly interpreted, he has become the national Germanic god. He is equally admired as a poet, as a scientist, as a philosopher, and as a man. The names of Luther, Lessing and Schiller, of Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner, even those of Kant and Schopenhauer, indeed even those of Frederick the Great and Bismarck cannot compete with Goethe's. He is in one person for Germany what Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo and Galileo are for Italy, Molière, Racine and Voltaire for France, Shakespeare, Newton and Darwin for England, Linné,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Carolus Linæus (Karl von Linné) was born in 1707 and died in 1778. Though he journeyed to Lapland and resided for a while

Tegnér<sup>2</sup> and Berzelius<sup>3</sup> for Sweden: the comprehensive expression of the country's enduring glory and highest culture. For Europe and America he should typify not merely the deepest and broadest poetic phenomenon but also the most superbly endowed human being in general that has concerned himself with literature since the days of the Renaissance.

When one examines his actual standing, however, in the non-Germanic reading world, the picture becomes at times somewhat different. The well-nigh uniform admiration which, in German-speaking countries, his least important works have enjoyed along with his best, combined with the idolatry that accompanies every note from his hand and every in the Netherlands, he is associated with the University of Upsala, where he was professor of botany from 1741 until his death. He is best known for his founding of the "Linnæan" system in botany. It was artificial as contrasted with the later system developed by Jussieu and his followers. Linné divided the entire plant world into twenty-four classes largely according to the number of styles or stigmas or stamens. It had very little value from the scientific point of view, though it was useful in its day in that it gave a key to botanical nomenclature.

—TRANSLATOR.

<sup>2</sup> Esaias Tegnér (1782-1846) was not a prolific writer. His collected works were published at Stockholm, 1876, in two volumes. His posthumous works appeared at Stockholm, 1873-1874, in three volumes. He is best known for his "Frithjofs Saga" (1825) based upon the old Norse saga of like name. It is one of the most famous romances in Scandinavian literature. His literary career began in 1808 with "War Songs for the Militia of Scania." He was elected bishop of Weixö in 1824. But his fame rests entirely, and securely, on his "Frithjof's Saga." It has been translated into the leading languages of the world.

—TRANSLATOR.

<sup>3</sup> Baron Johan Jacob Berzelius (1779-1848), aside from introducing a new nomenclature in chemistry, discovered selenium, thorium and cerium. He first exhibited calcium, barium, strontium, columbium, cilicium and zirconium as elements. He did a great deal by way of perfecting the atomic theory after Dalton. His textbook on chemistry (1820-1828) was translated into all European languages. Goethe became personally acquainted with him while at Karlsbad, in what was then Bohemia.

—TRANSLATOR.

sentence that is ascribed to him, has had a challenging effect, while *Goethe-Philologie*, so justified in Germany, has tended to discourage. Erudite terrorism, which considers it an act of presumption to refuse to pay attention to, indeed even to show admiration for, every single line by Goethe has goaded non-Germanic readers and investigators on to a type of criticism in which good grace plays a very subordinate rôle. In France and England, for example, the two countries that represent the highest scientific and artistic refinement of today, dissatisfaction with Goethe the man is not infrequently expressed while depreciatory judgments on his works are by no means uncommon. The French and English agree, though grudgingly, that Goethe is a personality of the first rank, but they do not stop here. At his poetic creations they level a species of criticism which is not to be considered unreasonable simply because it is sharp.

In France indifference and misjudgment, admiration and misunderstanding, have a much longer history than correct interpretation, which, even to this day, has by no means won a secure place for itself. Eduard Rod's book, 1898, replete as it is with information and acumen, is born of the ill-will that persists.

From the very first, when Goethe was known in France only as the author of *Werther*, he was admired by the sentimentalists but looked at askance by the followers of Voltaire (just as in Germany he was held in but slight esteem by Lessing and Nicolai). He was also regarded as a perverter of youth by the pious who were unable to see anything in the book but a challenge to suicide. Later, when

*Werther* began to enjoy more intelligent recognition, it was still this work of Goethe's younger days that constituted the chief obstacle in the way of an entirely fair appreciation. For nearly eight lustrems the public either would not or could not see in him anything other than the author of this sentimental little novel. And for a long while, even during the days of Madame de Staël, this frenzied poet of passion, conducting himself as a perfectly proper, indeed even distinguished official, was an object of actual amazement to Frenchmen who came to Weimar on a casual visit.

The French regarded *Götz* as the direct outgrowth of the theories of the predecessors of the Romantic School, that is to say, of the writers who balked at and fought against Classicism. The older generation consequently decried Goethe's dramas as formless and worthless. Likewise in his lyrics the French were slow to see anything but the romantic and supernatural elements that found unquestioned favor with the Romanticists — fairy kings, mermaids and sorcerers.

For years and years, *Faust* was looked upon as a work of unrelieved negation. Even so highly gifted an individual as Benjamin Constant, who knew Germany well, found *Faust* immoral, flat, sterile, and distinctly inferior to *Candide* with which it had been compared. Madame de Staël's opinion of Part I is, all the world knows, even more amusing: "Whether the drama is a phantom of poetic madness or of rationalistic *Weltschmerz* is momentarily indeterminable. We can only hope that there will be no repetition of this species of literary creation." There was no danger.

In extenuation of French critical opinion we should not forget that the judgments pronounced on Goethe by Germany's leading men at the time of the publication of the *Faustfragment* were no less unfavorable. Neither Schiller nor A. W. Schlegel showed enthusiasm of any sort. From Schiller's circle came the scornful taunt that Gretchen was portrayed like a "goose." Körner, Schiller's most intimate friend, complained of the doggerel (*Bänkelsängerton*). Tieck could not understand what a man to whom the spirit of the earth had been revealed was trying to do with the wretched Mephistopheles. Huber had such a vague idea as to the meaning of Faust's monologue that he came to the conclusion that there must be something cryptic about it, intelligible only to the initiated critic.

In France the attacks that appeared after 1870 were motivated by patriotism. The French thought that they would be striking victorious Germany a mortal blow if they could in some way belittle the personality of that particular German who was regarded as the pride of the nation. They read Goethe with very unfavorable eyes. The younger Dumas wrote all manner of malicious fiddle-faddle about him. The French took serious offense at the laconic way in which the elderly Goethe referred to his youthful indebtedness to French literature as contrasted with the profuse references that were derogatory in spirit. They were repelled by his circumstantiality as a narrator and by his inability to compose a greater whole, a weakness that characterizes his entire literary output. Moreover, the neo-Christian and neo-Catholic movement in France

took serious exception to the lack of Christian spirit in Goethe's writings as well as to that trait of the author which commentators and others have long been pleased to call his egoism, his selfishness.

In England the grudge against Goethe since the days of Carlyle and Lewes, and in America, since Emerson, has been motivated by the study of the moral side of life. There are phases of Goethe's character that jar the Englishman's conception of a gentleman. There is, for example, the way in which Goethe exposed the amiable Kestner and his wife Charlotte to public curiosity when he published his *Werther*, with its caricature of Albert, even though Albert and Kestner by no means coincided.

But the chief grievance that has found firm lodgement in modern England against Goethe is the one that concerns itself with the purely artistic in his lifework. In England great wonderment is expressed at the small number of actual masterpieces revealed by close scrutiny of Goethe's enormous output. An inordinate proportion of space is taken up with topical and occasional poems, heavy and stupid comedies and farces, incomPLETED plans, pure fragments, epigrams on persons or events now forgotten, inanimate allegories, and heaps of scientific material piled up in order to prove some impossible theory such as the woefully unsuccessful *Farbenlehre*. The masterpieces are relatively few, say the British, because, with the exception of a short period, Goethe never applied himself unreservedly to his true vocation—to the writing of poetry. He allowed business to sap him of his strength. For ten long years, and these the very best for a poet, from his twenty-seventh to his thirty-seventh, he

gives up poetic activity entirely and dedicates himself to the wearisome affairs of statecraft in Weimar. During all this time he writes practically nothing but poetry for set occasions. Hence the lack of unity in his more pretentious works. He let them lie too long; they are as a rule heterogeneously or poorly constructed. He constantly took them up anew and revised them, or he worked new pieces into them, or he continued them after he had half forgotten the original plan.

*Götz von Berlichingen* exists in three different forms, not counting detached scenes. *Iphigenie* was revised five times. *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* lay so long that it was finally completed after a plan that differed entirely from the original one; two versions exist. *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* was elaborated according to no plan whatsoever; it is a mere compilation. And finally we come to his main work, *Faust*, which was outlined and laid aside, and then taken up again and then laid aside again and taken up again, so that its composition extends over a period of sixty years. It is consequently difficult to say how many Fausts there are in *Faust*; one there certainly is not. The entire work contains a series of geological strata, and these strata lie at times as they do when a great mass of material tumbles over—in one confused and conglomerate pile.

Hence it is that Goethe is called an experimenter. His basic misfortune lay in the fact that he had no great literary tradition back of him which could support him and show him the way; that he either wanted to or had to create, experimentally, modern German literature. This explains his intense

sensitiveness to impressions from a great variety of sources.

First we note those from France, from the eighteenth century drama in Alexandrines. He wrote *Die Laune des Verliebten* and *Die Mitschuldigen*. Then under Herder's influence he became acquainted with Shakespeare, and felt the effects of the sentimentality of Rousseau and Ossian; his *Götz* is modeled after Shakespeare, while *Werther* grew out of Rousseau. Later he fell into pseudo-classicism, imitated the Greek tragedy in *Iphigenie*, wrote *Hermann und Dorothea*, an idyl on a pseudo-Greek scale, copied Propertius and Catullus in the *Römische Elegien*, imitated Martial in the *Venezianische Epigramme*, turned back to Racine and translated two tragedies of Voltaire. And last of all, influenced by Oriental poetry, he reproduced Hafis and Saadi.

Dowden has asked: What is his style? And Dowden has replied: Shall we say it is French-English-Greek-Roman-Persian-German?

The fact, however, that Goethe's works are modeled after so many different sorts of styles is not in itself necessarily objectionable. I know that in my own experience, the first time I stood on St. Mark's Place in Venice, directly opposite the old Doges' Palace, that miracle of Moorish-Gothic style which rests on a series of short, Greek columns, surmounted by Gothic arches, which in turn support the massive wall of red and white marble blocks—I know that the one word that immediately leaped to my lips as I stood there was: *Goethe*.

I was impressed with the number of worlds—Antique, Gothic, Oriental—that were here united

into a harmonious whole. And standing before this amazing architectural pile, my thoughts quite naturally reverted to that great spirit who reared a similar edifice in the world of poetry. Revelling in the beauties of the Strassburg Cathedral, he created the Gothic Gretchen; inspired by the Antique, he created the Greek women Iphigenie and Helena. He poetized the Italian Eleanore, the Dutch Clärchen, the Persian Suleika and then grouped these diverse incarnations of the spirit of different times and different lands as so many statues around the pediment of his own life monument.

The objection that Goethe was neither able to follow a traditional German style nor to create one has precious little weight. Who would dare say that the modern genius, with an undisputed right to seek his nourishment from the cultures of the earth, shall be born exclusively of national custom and shall tread only those ways that the national artists of times past have opened up? When a man of this rank is so constituted that from the very first the historic art forms lie before him like an open book, should he not be permitted to take from them anything and everything that coincides and harmonizes with his nature? When Goethe studies and lauds Boileau (read the letter to his sister Cornelia from Leipzig in which he places Boileau above Tasso), then Herder and the writers whom Herder cultivated, Euripides and Hafis for example, it is he himself in all of these disguises who transforms everything which, as an apprentice, he had appropriated.

That hoary and rustic conception concerning independence and originality is so stupid! Even

when Goethe was a young man people understood by an "original" person one who is peculiar, odd; and by a "genius" one who (apparently) owes no man anything. To that sort of originality Goethe refers when he has Mephistopheles reply to the student, who was so proud of his independence, with the stinging words: *Original! Fahr hin in deiner Pracht!* If originality could be acquired in that fashion then he would be a genius who walks on his head and gesticulates with his feet.

An artist, it is said, follows his own infallible instinct and is not an experimenter. Few artists have had more instinct than Goethe; yet he simply kept on experimenting. Who will say that an artist must not experiment? Within the past five centuries there has been no greater artist than Leonardo da Vinci; and no one ever experimented more than he. With his mind's surprising many-sidedness he anticipates Goethe; in his infallibility he even surpasses him. And yet he constantly designed artistic and technical plans, posited ingenious scientific conjectures—and very rarely carried them out.

The question will not down: What is Goethe and what can he be today for non-Germanic peoples, for the very considerable minority of contemporaneous, spiritually enlightened individuals devoid of national and religious prejudices and speaking a language that was not his? What is to be the attitude toward Goethe of those who do not cherish that unbounded piety for him which is the inevitable consequence of national and linguistic fellowship but who are attracted to substantial greatness and have no fear for the slight and yet necessary exertion

without which it is absolutely impossible to come into intimate association with him?

For most so-called educated men and women in each non-Germanic nation Goethe is only a name. There are to be sure quite a few who have read this and that by him without being genuinely impressed by what they have read or feeling sincerely grateful to the author for having written it. It is to this latter class that one should try to explain the real significance of Goethe. For these people he is not easily accessible; the language in which he wrote is not theirs, his being is a fortress and not an open town, and he lived in an age poles removed from the present. Goethe never rode in a railway train, he never sailed on a steamship. He read by a tallow lamp and wrote with a goose quill. Born but five years before Holberg's death, he was a contemporary of Voltaire in the first part of his life and of Byron in the second.

Outside of Germany one can hear otherwise quite intelligent individuals condemn the modern study of Goethe and characterize it as a matter of pure affectation. One can hear both trained and untrained men say that it is wholly abnormal for people of our day to pretend that they read *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* or *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* with pleasure. These works, critics of this sort contend, were once entertaining, perhaps even of absorbing interest, whereas now they have only historical value. Still less importance is attached to Goethe's letters.

It is true that a great number of human beings, especially, it may be, in the Scandinavian countries, merely affect or pretend to be admirers of Goethe;

that it is difficult for a modern young non-Germanic man or woman to wade through some of Goethe's epic and dramatic works; and finally, that the perusal of Goethe's letters is for the great majority a work of supererogation. Not only *Die Wanderjahre* and the second part of *Faust* but even *Werther* must now appear antiquated to youthful readers. Yet in the majority of instances one is richly rewarded for cracking the historic shell and forcing one's way into the human or poetic kernel. Indeed in many instances the fruit in question has no shell; it is all meat.

A half-grown boy or girl can read *Götz von Berlichingen* with genuine satisfaction. It is about the best introduction that could be selected for a boy, for aside from being a humorous and vivid portrayal of human beings it is replete with tumultuous accounts of brave deeds, zeal for liberty, passionate love, melodrama and resounding words. *Egmont* is a happy introduction for a young man or a mature young woman. One finds here no longer the pathos that characterizes *Götz*,—that pathos which, strange to say, Kierkegaard<sup>4</sup> missed in Goethe's works. By virtue of the poet's steady control of the situation, the characters now stand out clear, calm, and unforgettable.

The first part of *Faust* widens the horizon for

\* Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855), perhaps the greatest prose writer Denmark has ever known, was brought up in an intensely religious atmosphere. He spent his life fighting for the principles of Christianity. His later years were embittered by his violent quarrel with the State Church of Denmark which he claimed had the form but not the substance. It was as an outspoken opponent of Rasmus Nielsen, Kierkegaard's faithful disciple, that Brandes made his debut in literature.

Goethe's real greatness. The aim of the titular character is a definitive understanding and exhaustive enjoyment of the universe. A single scene, such as the walk on Easter Morning, with its highly colored pictures of life, the vivaciousness of the conception of nature, the melodious diction, and the depth, seriousness, and bitterness of the insight into human nature, contains the most exalted ideas thus far found in modern poetry.

These works give the young mind such a rich booty that a desire is awakened for more. In this way the reader soon becomes sufficiently versed in Goethe to apply himself to the *Gedichte*, possibly the most admirable part of Goethe's manifold achievement.

One will do best to begin with the *Balladen* which, containing as they do, an epic element, offer no particular difficulty. It is advisable to proceed from the quite simple ballads such as *Der Sänger* and *Der Fischer* to the profound ones such as *Der Gott und die Bajadere* and *Die Braut von Korinth*. After these the shorter philosophic works can be taken up, such as *Prometheus*, *Ganymed*, *Mahomets Gesang*, and after very little exertion one can read the poems descriptive of nature, or the love songs, or the table songs.

The poems that reveal Goethe's indisputable mastery within a self-imposed boundary open up a view into his personal life of feeling and thought with all its wholesomeness and fullness. He can be as simple as a folksong or he can present an entire philosophy in a brief poem. The inner richness of his being makes it impossible for even a short stanza to be empty. It is here that we derive an idea as

to the real magnitude of his being. He can be playful and graceful, rich and jovial, aglow with an inner fire, impetuously defiant, jocose, wise, sublime.

It is easy in this way to get an impression of Goethe's greatness; and having reached this point, it becomes a source of unaffected joy to see him disguise himself now as a Roman, now as a Persian. A study of the *Römische Elegien* or the *West-Oestlicher Divan* reveals the vastness of Goethe's thirst for knowledge, his longing for ever greater and ever-widening fields; furthermore, one responds with keener pleasure to the increasingly facile play of poetic expression.

Having reached this point it is possible to steep one's self in the boundless store of apothegms in verse and prose which Goethe bequeathed to the world. It is a veritable gold mine of wisdom and experience pertaining unto things of this life. The older one becomes, the more nourishment one will find for his mind and the more material for new deliberation. Even where these apothegms are less effective because of the thought contained in them than because of their lapidary style, even here, in their brevity, they have an amazing power.

After this it is possible to take up Goethe's life, his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. This is one of the great books of the nineteenth century. It is Goethe's attempt to explain himself. It is, however, not simply the unique explanation of the genesis of a genius that admits of no imitation; it is a very educative work on general principles. Goethe's life, his conversations (which are often excellent though not always wholly reliable), and the best of his letters are writings from which those of the younger gen-

eration who wish to be autodidactic—many never will—can learn a great deal concerning simple but important characteristics such as strict, thorough-going order, constant attention to the guiding call of one's own nature and the power that follows therefrom, and finally to the development of a keen receptivity and many-sided humanity.

Goethe had his very definite limitations. He was a cunctator; and he was not a heroic character, despite the fact that he was a real man. But one cannot expect the characteristics of a Garibaldi in a Goethe any more than in a Shakespeare. Goethe remains the great model in many spiritual fields.

When one has seen how distinctly personal his entire poetic activity is, that is to say, how little actual material there is in his work, one is at once struck by the lack of self-reflection. One never meets Goethe's mere self in his works. Smaller minds picture themselves; Goethe never. He never lost himself in self-contemplation. He never wished to live from his own blood. He invariably sought his nourishment outside of himself. He is concrete even when he is lyrical. It is from him that we learn to abhor chimeras and to hold fast to realities.

That is one point. Another lesson that we can learn from Goethe is never to go scurrying around after the material goods of this life; never to seek mere personal development, but to revere that which germinates and grows unaided within us. It is from Goethe that we learn never to seek any nourishment other than that which suits us, that which we can digest and assimilate.

It is wonderful when we stop to think how little of this world Goethe ever felt a desire to see. He

never saw America, though it interested him greatly. He never saw Paris, he never saw London, he never saw St. Petersburg, he never saw Vienna. Only one single time did he catch a fleeting glimpse of Berlin. He flourished like a green bay tree in a town of 6,200 inhabitants.

If he passionately longed for Rome and studied Italy from north to south, Sicily included, it was because there came a time in his life when the sight of the monuments of antiquity and of the art works of the Renaissance was an actual essential to his inner progress. Nothing ever attracted him which was not necessary to his inner development.

Sparing of the nature within him, he understood the nature without. Because everything in him was quiet growth, peaceful unfolding, slow formation, and complete transformation, he understood growth, transformation, metamorphosis in the natural world and came in time to make far-reaching discoveries in botany, osteology, and geology. In one single field of natural science he made a grave error, an error which he never abandoned, just as he made mistakes at times as poet in the domain of the epic and the drama. But he went as far in science as he could in his rôle of nature-loving and nature-grasping seer. What could not be seen or foreboded or conjectured eluded his range of power. But who can now see as he saw!

Take, by way of illustration, a field that has only subordinate significance for his fame, such as the criticism of art; read his little treatise on Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*. This is the first explanation we have of the renowned painting appreciated and explained by virtue of the seer's eye which he had

in a matchless degree, the eye that analyzes and synthesizes at the same time.

There have lived, to be sure, more accomplished poets than Goethe; he was perfect only in his shorter works. The larger ones he worked over so completely that the one text confuses the other, or he let them lie until the spirit came over him again, took them up anew, gave the new an artistic connection with the old, and struggled with it all so long that it acquired a new motivation or became loggy, diffuse, inconsequential. But what is good is superior to anything that has been written within recent centuries. Greater though Goethe was than any poet that mighty France has produced, he was greater as a mind than as a poet. As a human being in general, he was greater than his life-work because of the example he set as to how one should live.

His influence on his people is immeasurable, incalculable, overwhelming, despite the fact that he has not been able to fashion his people after his own model. If Germany at this moment is one of the most powerful countries on the earth, Goethe has had his part as a teacher and educator in this development. If, on the other hand, Germany in its power has fallen a hopeless prey to arrogance and haughtiness, it simply means a defection from Goethe.

He was a picture in miniature of the producing, classifying, preserving power of the universe. He produced and understood with equal certainty; he had an equal amount of imagination and reason. He never sought to know himself but to grasp nature. Self-reflection was foreign to him, self-development was everything. He protected his self-

development with an instinct of self-preservation that was at once his wise counselor and unerring guide. He was a creator within the creation, a reason within all-reason, a nature within nature, just as we speak of a state within a state. He was, too, within himself a whole and complete civilization.



**WOLFGANG GOETHE**



# WOLFGANG GOETHE

## CHAPTER I

### FRANKFORT-ON-THE-MAIN—PARENTS—CHILDHOOD AND COUNT THORAND—GRETCHEN

FRANKFORT-ON-THE-MAIN, where Johann Wolfgang Goethe was born on the 28th of August, 1749, was, by reason of its location and history, a sort of metropolis, so ancient as to have been the site of one of Charlemagne's royal palaces. In 843 it became the capital of the East Franconian Empire, that is to say, of Germany. It remained an Imperial Free City until the thirteenth century. At the time of the Reformation, in 1536, it became the permanent place of election of the German emperors. The city preserved its independence and privileges until the middle of the eighteenth century. Frankfort was an aristocratic Republic with walls, towers, and gates, within which the self-sufficient citizens, isolated from the surrounding world, were governed by a few old patrician families who kept an eye ever single to venerable traditions. Measured by modern standards, Frankfort, at the time of Goethe's birth, was only a small place with about 33,000 inhabitants, but it was a prosperous commercial centre

where the merchants' fairs, immensely attractive to foreigners, were held twice a year. It was a pious, formal, conventional, old-fashioned city, wholly capable of taking care of itself and solicitous always lest the citizen of good family escape. Lying midway between North Germany and South Germany, though much more akin to the South than to the North, it was here that North German intelligence and pedantry flourished along side of South German lack of restraint, joy in living, and love of colors, manifested especially during the coronation festivities following the various imperial elections.

Of these the ever-alert boy had heard long before he saw them, for there was, as Goethe himself says in his autobiography, no Frankfort citizen of mature years who did not look upon the coronation festivities as the red letter days in his life. Goethe's great uncle Von Loen had described in detail the coronation of Charles VII in 1742. That of Francis I in 1745 had likewise been magnificent and had won the hearts of the people because of the unquestioned marital love between the Emperor and Maria Theresa. The coronation of Joseph II as Roman King in 1764, which had so completely captivated the fancy of Wolfgang, then fourteen years old, was a delight to all the senses. The mere arrival in the city of the Electors, each accompanied by an enormous retinue, was an occasion of matchless splendor. Even the coachmen and postillions, Goethe says, looked as though they came from another country, indeed from another world. There was so much to look at and point at and explain that one never came to one's self. The eye roamed over gorgeously adorned doublets, gold

embroidered mantles, huge tall feather hats. The ear was filled with the peal of bells from the steeples and tones of the organ from the cathedral. Fountains gushed forth red wine and white wine. A fatted ox was roasted on a great spit over a coal fire.

Dignified on workdays, on holidays the city fairly revelled in exhibitions of splendor and luxury. Its inhabitants were a people who, living in a milder climate than that of North Germany, were of a lighter temper and a warmer nature, a people whose sensuousness was naïve and whose intelligence never became unnatural. In contrast to Berlin, Hamburg and Königsberg as spiritual centres, Frankfort lay south of the wine-line—that line which draws the boundary between the cities in which the joy of life grows and those into which the joy of life has to be imported.

The contrast between Goethe himself and his predecessors in German literature from the North is most pronounced. Gottsched was rational, Klopstock was supramundane, Lessing was all intelligence, all Enlightenment without grounding in the appreciation of nature or history. Herder, who attacks Enlightenment and continually speaks of the unconscious, the natural cause and the mystery is, in his innermost being, devoid of substantial appreciation of his immediate surroundings. Herder had no definite and distinct relation to the physical world and consequently no eye for painting and sculpture. It is no wonder, then, that he felt so ill at ease on Italian soil and that he became more and more irritated with increasing age by those very characters in Goethe's works in whom Goethe implants a sound

and strong, sensuous realism. In short, these writers from the North manifested at all times a marked tendency toward moralizing, accompanied by vastly more reason than imagination.

The lighter, more pliant, more frivolous Wieland, who incidentally did not lack grace, is, as a South German, more of a sexual being than any of the above-mentioned Northerners. Kant, the great critical philosopher, comes from Königsberg; Schelling, the philosopher of nature, whose ideas not infrequently appeal to and coincide with Goethe's own ideas, hails, like Wieland, from South Germany.

In Frankfort, as in Goethe, northern and southern Germany met and formed a unity which, as Hehn has said, reminds one of an agate: half gray, half white. The town continued to remain a central point long after Goethe's birth, for in the nineteenth century it became the first seat of the German Confederation and later (1848) of the first German Reichstag.

Goethe left Frankfort in 1775; he was then twenty-six years old. Though he soon felt socially at home in Weimar, where he spent the last fifty-six years of his life, he never became entirely acclimated to Weimar. He felt rather as though he were banished to a land where the sky is grayer, the sun paler, the air colder—a land without grapes.

## II

It is impossible to explain the origin of genius; and yet we find certain fundamental traits of Goethe's make-up in his ancestors, as he himself has

roguishly told us in a little poem, the following lines of which have been quoted time out of mind:

Vom Vater hab' ich die Statur,  
Des Lebens ernstes Führen,  
Von Mütterchen die Frohnatur  
Die Lust zu fabuliren.

Goethe seems to owe to his father, Johann Caspar Goethe (1710-1782) the orderliness that was characteristic of his personal conduct as well as of his literary and scientific papers, the systematic element in his existence, the discipline at first forced upon him and later self-imposed. Without this, his ingenuity along various diverging lines and his in-born defiance of rules would not have allowed him to become the conscientious and diligent worker that he was. It was the poet, the artist, in him that sketched all sorts of plans and let them lie unfinished for decades—*paresseux avec délices*, as Figaro says of himself in Beaumarchais; it was the man of order and system in him that induced him to complete fragments in large numbers and to subject the first sketch to infinite revision.

Goethe's father was thirty-nine years old, his mother eighteen, when he was born. The contrast in the natures of the parents was strengthened still further by the difference in their ages, and equalized in the son in such a way that the personality of his mother became the stronger and the one that stood in the more intimate relation to Middle Germany.

The father was a lawyer; he had studied at Giesen and Strassburg. For the latter city he had an especial regard and eventually sent his son there. But of far greater significance for the son's future

was the fact that his father had lived for a while in Italy, and longest in Rome. The journey to Italy, from which he returned in 1740, was the great event in his life. The entrance hall to the house was adorned with Roman views in copper engravings. When still at a tender age, the son had seen, inside and out, day after day, the Piazza del Popolo, the Coliseum, San Angelo, the Piazza of St. Peter's, and St. Peter's itself. The otherwise laconic father described in detail these buildings and places. He had a pronounced preference for the Italian language, which he taught to his wife and later to his son and daughter. Being a collector, like his son, he had brought back from Italy a small collection of species of marble and other natural curiosities. He devoted a great deal of time to slowly, carefully and methodically writing up the description of his Italian journey, in Italian, with the help of an Italian teacher, and copying it off in numerous pamphlets. Having, too, a by no means ordinary voice, his wife was obliged to accompany the old gentleman in the singing of Italian arias and melodies. He could also play the flute and the lute.

Johann Caspar Goethe, who in 1742 had received the title of *Kaiserlicher Rat*, touchily and for very inconclusive reasons, retired from all public activity and spent his remaining days as a domestic tyrant. Martinet that he was on general principles, his wife never breathed freely, never came to herself, until death removed him after she had spent a number of years nursing him.

Goethe's father was not a man of mean characteristics. He possessed endurance, persistence, zeal for learning and teaching, and marked conscien-

tiousness. He was strict with himself and others and had marked ability to do without those things that are ordinarily called necessities. It is plain that some of these traits were inherited by the son. The most conspicuous contrast to his son lay in an utter lack of imagination.

In 1776 he suffered a stroke of apoplexy and was from then on an humbled soul; in 1779 he began to lose his memory; in 1781 he had another stroke which paralyzed him. He died in 1782—and his death evoked not one word of lament from his son.

Strong pedant that he was, he had watched with a firm hand and an unloving disposition over the instruction and education of his children. In many ways, Goethe's education resembles that of John Stuart Mill half a century later. As a mere child, the father had had Wolfgang taught Latin, Greek, French, English, Italian, Hebrew, geography and history, as well as the basic principles of various natural sciences. The boy was obliged to write down his conversations with his comrades or his father; he had to make an outline of the sermons he heard on Sundays; and he had to write poetry on various themes as an exercise in metrics and rhyming.

The father was equally exacting as a teacher and a householder. Time and again did the son have to suffer from the old gentleman's penuriousness, so that loans from his comrades and friends constituted the only way out. When, for example, he published at his own expense, in company with Merck, his first more pretentious work, *Gottfried von Berlichingen*, the father flatly refused to render him any sort of financial aid. Johann Casper Goethe treated his son somewhat as Frederick William I, a genera-

tion earlier, had treated the Great King, at that time Prince. The sternness, irrational and intolerable, was little inclined to instil in the two great men a feeling of filial piety, though it had its good effect. The precocious boy could well stand excessive hemming-in, and his poetic nature, independent as it was and rebellious at the very thought of restraint, became so much the more powerful because it had been subjected to severe discipline.

Whereas the father descended from German working men (his grandfather came to Frankfort as a tailor's apprentice and acquired considerable wealth; his great-grandfather had been a smith), the poet's mother, Katharina Elizabeth Textor (1731-1808), called *Frau Rat*, or by her pet name *Frau Aja*, came of an aristocratic family. The poet's maternal ancestors, in several branches, had been teachers, lawyers, and distinguished officials. Frau Aja's father was Frankfort's highest official, City Governor (*Stadtschultheiss*) and Chairman of the fourteen Councillors (*Schöppen*). These councillors not only controlled the city but occupied its highest tribunals. The City Governor, chosen for life, was Frankfort's juridical head. The name Textor had been latinized; it was originally Weber.

Frau Aja was a brunette with dark brown eyes, tall and well formed, healthy and unaffected, natural and extremely vivacious, with a fund of good humor and jolly good mood that simply would not be influenced by any sort of adversity, warm of heart and free of care, a true daughter of the Rhineland. Her ears had always been accustomed to the music of the Main; the dialect of Frankfort had always been her language. There had not been instilled

into her the more refined manners of exclusive society, though she had received a good education in the public schools and possessed that broad culture which makes one frank and free in all conditions of life even when in the presence of superiors. She was not simply natural, she was nature itself. She was not simply fanciful and endowed with marked ability as a narrator; she had also a clear understanding and precocious experience. As a result of her cheerful piety and determination to get the best out of everything, she had created for herself a philosophy of life which never forsook her. The God whom she had found in the Old Testament was, as her son says, an unchangeable family God. She felt that the unhappiness of a great many people was of their own making; their lives were bitter because they themselves had made them so. She felt impelled to know the good and the bad sides of life, to feel its strength and to have confidence in herself. In one place she says: "One should enjoy the small pleasures of life and not strive after the great ones. I brook no thorns; I merely reach out after the smaller joys. If the door is low I bow. If the stone can be pushed out of the way, I do so; if it is too heavy, I walk around it. In this way I find every day something that delights me."

She was easily inspired. Vivacious conversation was her chief pleasure; association with great men enraptured her. Like her son she was rich in comparisons and was an exceptionally good inventor and narrator of stories. With brilliant self-characterization she once wrote to Frau von Stein: "I have a gift of making everyone, utterly regardless of rank, age or sex, happy on leaving me. I like people

very much, a fact which old and young appreciate. I go through the world without demands, and that pleases the sons and daughters of the earth. I preach to no one. I always try to find the good points in people and leave the bad ones to Him who created mankind and who best knows how to smooth off the sharp corners. In this way I keep myself well, happy and contented." She was entirely without sentimentality, though she always wore her heart on her sleeve.

That the son, from childhood on, played comedies, took an interest in the theatre, the art of acting, and the writing of dramas, was due to the mother's influence. She nourished a burning passion for the theatre, had the very best of judgment concerning everything theatrical, and constantly received actors into her home. The son's sanguinity is also to be traced back to the mother, she being indeed even more sanguine than he. She had a few adages which are highly characteristic of her personality and partly of his. One was: "Experience creates hope." Another was: "Learn to live and live to learn." There was no cowardice in her character. She preserved, resultantly, her equanimity even during the war times through which she lived, when foolish and depressing rumors were daily buzzing about her ears. Like her son, she saw to it that she was neither disturbed nor downcast. Her calm was dear to her. Love of rest was a chief feature of her character. She avoided strong, violent impressions, had a pronounced dislike for anything disquieting or exciting, was utterly indifferent to newspaper headlines on political events, demanded of her servants that they should not relate anything

painful or disagreeable that had taken place in her own home or in that of her neighbors. She was, moreover, of a very active nature, rid herself quickly of all difficulties, and invariably removed the most disagreeable one first.

That her life, however, was not smooth and easy is seen from the fact that of her children only Wolfgang and Cornelia lived. In 1755 she lost her second daughter, then one year old, in 1759 a six-year-old son, Wolfgang's playmate, for whom he took down lessons and stories but at whose death he shed not one single tear. Shortly thereafter there died another little daughter, two and a half years old, and a few years later (1760) the youngest son. The attempt has been made to explain all of these deaths as due to various diseases introduced into Frankfort when the troops were mobilized there. But who knows the real cause? With a single exception, Goethe's own children, two boys and two girls, died when quite young. These deaths have been ascribed to the fact that the maternal grandfather was addicted to drink and that indeed the grandparents on both sides of the house were inordinate lovers of wine. In each of the above cases the explanation is eminently unsatisfactory. There were in all probability germs of disease in the family such as one frequently finds in families that produce geniuses.

### III

Goethe was only seven years old when the Seven Years War broke out with the invasion of Silesia by Frederick the Great in 1756. Not only in Germany itself but in neighboring states as well two

parties arose, one for, one against Frederick the Great. Goethe's grandfather, who, as a Councillor of Frankfort, had carried the imperial canopy over Francis I at his coronation and had received a great gold chain with the picture of the Empress, sided with Austria. Some of his daughters and sons-in-law did likewise. Goethe's father, who had been made a *Rat* by Charles VII, the rival emperor, remained loyal to Prussia. Consequently the family gatherings on Sunday were soon disturbed. Discussions arose, hostilities became frequent, painful scenes ensued.

In 1755 the same thing happened to the little boy that happened to the great Voltaire. The earthquake in Lisbon had shaken his firm faith in a good God. A year later his faith was shaken in another direction. He had always been taught that this or that which was agreed upon as being proper and befitting should be done, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the people. Otherwise what would people think! What would they say to this? The boy had genuine reverence for that enigmatic concept, *Die Leute*. He had imagined that this *Volk* would understand and appreciate impartially. Now he saw that the opposite was true. Great merits such as those of Frederick the Great were belittled and derided, indisputable accomplishments such as his were abused and distorted, not by the rabble, but by such otherwise judicious men as his grandfather and his uncles. He lost his faith in the people's sense of justice.

On New Year's Day, 1759, just as the father had re-arranged and renovated the house in the *Hirschgraben*, the French soldiers were billeted upon him.

It was particularly exasperating to him to have no less an individual than the personal representative of the King of France, *le lieutenant du roy*, Count Thoranc, who was an officer in charge of rents, reclamations and claims. It was his business to settle disputes between the troops and the citizens and to adjust all financial matters. The Count was a French nobleman, born at Castle Mouans near Grasse in the Provence. He was tall, slender, serious by nature, with fiery black eyes and dignified bearing, a passionate lover of art, a zealous collector of paintings, extremely polite and considerate withal, though stern when offended.

Goethe's father was beside himself with wrath when he saw his house, in which every single object was arranged with a scrupulous pedantry, exposed to the arbitrariness of an unwelcome stranger. Since, too, the old gentleman was a friend of Prussia he naturally hated the French. He consequently and immediately placed himself on a war footing with the *Königsleutenant*, never exchanging a word with him, though he spoke French quite well. Goethe's mother, who could speak Italian but not French, had to begin at once to learn it, transacting business in the meanwhile with the Count through an interpreter, Herr Diene, the adaptable and intelligent neighbor across the street.

The Count, according to Goethe, was flattered at the trouble to which the mother of the family subjected herself at her age—she was then twenty-eight and from Goethe's point of view rather old, and since there was something cheerful and spiritual in the Count's bearing, there soon arose the very best of feeling between him on the one hand and

Goethe's mother and the interpreter on the other. Though there came times when the Count was melancholy, shut himself in and saw no one, once these spells were over, he was again the same gentle, lighthearted, vivacious Frenchman. He remained in Frankfort for more than three years. He seems to have left the Goethe house in the summer of 1761 and Frankfort temporarily in June of the same year. He returned to Frankfort for a month in January-February 1763. Young Goethe passed in and out at his door, became his favorite and received from him his first impression of French character and point of view.<sup>1</sup>

The alert youth came, however, in contact not simply with one prominent Frenchman; he received a general introduction to French customs and usages. For the benefit of the soldiers quartered in Frankfort, a company of French actors had come to the city. Every evening they played tragedies of Racine or less renowned writers, comedies of Molière, Des-touches, Marivaux, La Chaussée, Diderot, and Palissot. Goethe, having received a free ticket of admission to the theatre from his influential grandfather, spent all of his evenings there. At first he enjoyed the action without being able to understand what was being said. In this way he trained his ear so thoroughly that in course of time he could not only understand French but speak and write it

<sup>1</sup> Is it possible that the intelligent and amiable French official, who lived in the same house, made absolutely no impression on the young mother who could not help but compare him with her own querulous, suspicious, disagreeable, domineering, pedantic husband? I have been told in France that a package of letters from Goethe's mother to Count Thoranc was found at Castle Mouans about ten years ago. My authority is the well known French author Léon Blum, but it is possible that he has been misinformed.

fairly well. Of inestimable value to him in this connection was the acquaintance of a small French boy of his own age who belonged to the company.

## IV

In his autobiography Goethe has interwoven with his account of the coronation festivities the story of his first captivation by a young woman. He has portrayed with the art of a great master this youthful love affair, which must have made a profound impression upon him in view of the fact that he identified the object of his juvenile enthusiasm and yearning with the heroine of *Faust*, at least so far as the name is concerned, for he named the heroine of *Faust* after the girl with whom he as a mere boy had fallen in love.

Goethe tells how he made the acquaintance, on the streets and in the alleys of Frankfort, of a number of boys of equal age, or a little older, primarily by reason of the fame that he enjoyed because of his skill at writing verses. Thus he became familiar with a circle of young people who belonged to the lower middle class and in comparison with whom he was relatively wealthy and decidedly aristocratic. The others made their way through life as copyists for lawyers, tutors to small children, messengers for merchants, or errand boys for brokers. They held their frugal meetings on Sundays and holidays, and amused themselves, after the fashion of half-grown boys, with all sorts of hoaxes. They induced Goethe to send to a slightly conceited young chap a declaration of love, in verse, somewhat like the one that

Shakespeare's Malvolio sends to Olivia. They also persuaded him to write the answer.

At one of their gatherings he met for the first time a young girl, Gretchen by name, who served the company with wine. Goethe does not say where (it was in the unpretentious inn *Zum Puppenschinkelchen* where she was a waitress). She was "of unusual, and if we take her surroundings into consideration, of incredible beauty."

Goethe has given the figure an extraordinary freshness, good sense, and in view of her immature adorer, a chaste and restrained bearing. From the time of the first meeting her figure haunts him incessantly. If he has no hope of seeing her soon, he goes to church solely on her account, where, during the long Protestant services, he can look at her to his heart's content, though he does not dare offer her his company when she leaves. That her form is associated with the Church seems even now to anticipate *Faust*.

On the occasion of that jocular mystification, the fourteen-year-old boy, suddenly finding it his duty to affect the woman's rôle, wrote down everything that he would have liked to have Gretchen write to him, and thereby mystified himself no less than another. Gretchen, sitting by the window, rose from her spinning wheel—a reference which, like that to the church, is evidently premonitory of *Faust*. She gives him sisterly, reasonable advice, reads through his works, and when he characterizes it as the acme of happiness if one who esteemed and adored her could receive just such a letter from her, she signs it half in jest. In ecstasy he wishes to embrace her. "No kissing," she says, "that is so

common; but love me, if that be possible." He worships her; he presses his lips against her hands.

He portrays her bearing and gestures. She either sat by the spinning wheel or she assumed some other position that was becoming to her. She clasped her hands around her crossed arms, supported herself against the edge of the table and listened attentively while in this position. She gave no one her hand; she could not endure being touched. Only at times she sat down by the side of Wolfgang, especially when he wrote or read aloud, and then it might happen that she confidently leaned her arm against his shoulder or looked on the book or paper. Once she kissed him on the forehead. That is the unique caress he is supposed to have received from her.

So tenderly has Goethe as a man of sixty years delineated this situation. In actuality it could hardly have been so delicate and incorporeal. For this is unquestionably the relation to which the seventeen-year-old Wolfgang refers, when, on October 1, 1766, he writes from Leipzig to his friend Moors concerning his affair with Kätkchen Schönkopf; he says that he could win this girl's good will only with his heart and his character: "I need no presents in order to preserve her good favor and I now look down with eyes of scorn on the exertions with which I formerly won the favor of a W." That goes to show that the fair Gretchen in Frankfort was just as susceptible to the joy created by an attractive present as is the Gretchen in *Faust*. "W" means in all probability *Wagnerin* just as the "S" of the letter means *Schönköpfin*.

However visionary and unreal the affair may

have been on the part of the fourteen-year-old boy, it came to a sudden and tragic end and neither party was really to blame. In his autobiography Goethe does not even go so far as to ascribe guilt to Gretchen's cousins. In all probability, however, Gretchen was more guilty than Goethe himself admits. A young man of the circle, Johann Adolf Wagner by name, had induced Wolfgang to give him a letter of introduction to his grandfather, the influential Textor, as a result of which the young man in question received a position as an officer of justice. In this capacity he became guilty of such serious offenses as swindling, forgery, false bonds, and falsification of wills. In the resultant lawsuit even the boy Goethe was cross-examined by a friend of the family to whom the case had been entrusted by the magistrate. The examiner was greatly grieved, for he desired above all to shield his guiltless friends. The outcome of the entire hurry-scurry was that Wolfgang was removed from the dubious society into which he had been drawn while Gretchen was banished from Frankfort and sent home.

Yet her picture hovered before his mind for quite a while; it was evidently interwoven with the Friederike Brion episode when Goethe conceived Gretchen's delightful figure in *Faust*. On the other hand, the hubbub into which Goethe was dragged through his alliance with the Frankfort Gretchen was undeniably the immediate inspiration of his first bitter comedy entitled *Die Mitschuldigen*. He himself says in his autobiography: "As a result of my affair with Gretchen and through its indirect consequences, I gained, when still quite young, an insight into the mysterious forces that are undermining

middle-class society." He adds that out of that sort of experience he planned several dramas of which only *Die Mitschuldigen* was completed.

But it was not until nearly nineteen years of his life had elapsed that young Goethe could complete such a work, evincing as it does almost disagreeable maturity and pessimism. He first passes through various stages. However great his skill in verse-making when quite young, we have, aside from some congratulatory rhymes, no other poetry from Goethe's childhood except the *Gedanken über Jesu Christi Höllenfahrt*, published in 1766. This is a denunciatory speech by Christ, in well constructed and carefully rhymed strophes, delivered to the doomed in Hell. It is a quite baroque introduction to Goethe's poetic activity, for it reveals, in a thoroughly impersonal fashion, the influence of the then dominating Klopstock and his school.

## CHAPTER II

### LEIPZIG—FIRST COLLECTION OF POEMS—*Die Mitschuldigen*: A DRAMA

JOHANN CASPER GOETHE sent his son Wolfgang, when only sixteen, to the University of Leipzig to study law. Wolfgang would have much preferred Göttingen, where the science of languages and antiquities flourished, and though he adapted himself to his father's determination, he studied at Leipzig only what pleased him.

The main thing in the young man's development just then, however, was not the fact that he went to this place or to that, but that he escaped from the city of his birth and was placed in entirely new surroundings. The Germans have, incidentally, in contrast to the Scandinavians, French and English, the excellent arrangement by which the young student rarely spends his entire time at just one university, but avails himself of the opportunities offered by several. In case the first that he attends is not wholly to his liking, he quickly selects another that seems to offer greater advantages for his particular development.

Goethe attended lectures on jurisprudence, though without either substantial pleasure or enduring profit, on history, physics and Latin literature; he studied under those professors who represented æsthetics, Clodius for example, and Gottsched and

Gellert on literature. But he wrote burlesques on Clodius, saw only the comic side of Gottsched, whose influence after all on German literature had been profound, and never came into a really intimate relation with Gellert, who, half frivolous, half pietistic, could not completely win the young Goethe's heart, despite the fact that he had influenced him more or less, as can be seen in his first little dramatic attempt, *Die Laune des Verliebten*.

Young Wolfgang learned indeed more from the city than from its university. Away from home for the first time on his own responsibility, in absolute freedom, lord over his own time, with no stern father to dog his steps, he drew abundant nourishment from the life and art of Leipzig, then so cultured. Among his slightly older friends, E. W. Behrisch seems to have meant the most to him. Behrisch was broadminded and affable, and keenly appreciative of the ventures of the youthful genius. He won the confidence which Goethe just then so badly needed; and when Behrisch left Leipzig in order to accept a position as tutor to a young German prince, he wrote three odes to him, the third and best of which contains deeply emotional expressions concerning the grief natural to an over-sensitive mind:

Sei gefühllos!  
Ein leichtbewegtes Herz  
Ist ein elend Gut  
Auf der wankenden Erde.  
.

Tod ist Trennung!  
Dreifacher Tod  
Trennung ohne Hoffnung  
Wiederzusehen.

In Leipzig, Goethe laid the foundation not only for his literary but for his artistic education as well. It is in Leipzig that he is initiated, not simply into the cultivation of plastic art, which follows him his whole life long, but into the striving after talented dilettantism in drawing and sketching. He achieves, as a matter of fact, passing excellence as a plastic artist, though he did not fully realize that his efforts in this direction were merely those of a dilettant until fully twenty years later. He frequents the home of the engraver Stock in order to learn the art of engraving; he is also a steady guest in the home of the painter Adam Friedrich Oeser, under whose guidance he learns how to draw accurately and gracefully. Oeser in turn, who had been a close personal friend of Winckelmann, introduces him into the general history of art. It was in Oeser's home that Winckelmann had written the work that marks a distinct epoch in Germany, *Gedanken über die Nachahung der griechischen Werke*. Oeser himself, be it said, was not a mere blind follower of Winckelmann; he cherished, to be sure, a genuine reverence for the antique, but as a painter he was partly Italian and partly French and had moreover been influenced by Rembrandt. There is hardly any doubt but that it was in Oeser's home that Goethe conceived the initial regard for Winckelmann which inspired him, even in old age, to write a very good book in his honor.

It was in Leipzig that he read him for the first time, and whoever has read Winckelmann as a young man will readily understand what a strong, though abstract, enthusiasm for Grecian antiquity

was instilled in the then untested and inexperienced mind.

The effect on Goethe was not seen until much later. But Winckelmann's statement that the special characteristic of Greek masterpieces is a noble and quiet greatness made a lasting impression upon Goethe's inmost being, especially since Lessing, of whose *Laokoon* he had at the same time made a thorough study, proclaimed the fact that noble simplicity and calm grandeur constituted the ideal of the ancients. To Oeser's daughter Goethe writes in 1769: "He who treads the *simple* way, let him tread it and be silent. Humility and circumspection are the most essential prerequisites for every step on this way which finally gives its due reward. This I owe to your dear father." *Laokoon* delighted him partly because of the sharpness of its reasoning and the clarity of its idea. Here was a book with a unilateral straightforwardness, of which the young reader had hitherto been unaware, that stamped once for all descriptive poetry and emotionally programmatic art as erroneous methods of procedure. As the entire literate world now knows, Lessing was merely attempting to draw a clear and unmistakable line of demarcation between the field and function of poetry on the one hand and those of plastic art on the other.

The book delighted him all the more by reason of its pleasing attitude toward beauty. It banished the ugly (Death portrayed as a skeleton, the Devil with hideous grimaces) from the field of plastic art, wherein the appeal is to the intuition, and relegated it (as an element in universal harmony) to the realm of poetry, wherein the appeal is to the imag-

ination. It was as if young Goethe himself had said that Death was a genius with inverted torch, hardly to be differentiated from sleep, and not a skeleton with rattling bones. Owing to a peculiar shyness, young Wolfgang had become acquainted with such men as Gottsched and Gellert, but not with Lessing who had been in Leipzig for a while.

That Goethe did not allow himself to be led blindly along by the theories of *Laokoon* is proved by the fact that he undertook a journey to Dresden in order to see its rich and beautiful collection of paintings. Despite his intensive study of ancient sculpture, he did not permit himself time in Dresden for even a brief visit to that part of the gallery. He saw only hurriedly the Italian paintings and that for the genuinely Goethean reason that he was unfamiliar, at first hand, with the landscapes and people portrayed in them. But he studied Dutch paintings to his heart's satisfaction, notwithstanding the fact that Lessing had scornfully and unreasonably disposed of them by calling them painters of dirt (*Kotmaler*).

Since his father had instilled in him a profound hatred of hotels, he rented a room in the home of relatives of one of his Leipzig comrades, a shoemaker by trade and an excellent character at heart. He became so thoroughly taken up with Dutch paintings that he saw with Dutch eyes. The home of the shoemaker was to him an Ostade by day and a Schalcken by night.

Externally a complete change came over the young man while in Leipzig, which he later, in *Faust*, called "a little Paris." He doffed his old-fashioned, home-spun clothing, such as he had worn

in Frankfort, and dressed himself with great care and good taste. It was especially in Professor Böhme's home that he learned to set a real value on polite and polished manners. Frau Böhme took a maternal interest in him; she taught him much that was æsthetically valuable.

The chief event, however, in the emotional life of the temperamental young student was that he fell violently in love. The object of his affectionate interest was Käthchen Schönkopf, daughter of a wine-dealer at whose house he was accustomed to take his midday meal. She was an attractive young girl of the middle class, amiable, correct and certainly not unresponsive to his homage. But he became a prey to intolerable jealousy, suffered extreme torture and made her miserable at the same time. She loved him passionately. As late as 1770, he writes to her from Frankfort: "You know that so long as I have known you I have lived only as a part of you." The relation between the two ran through various stages of sensitiveness and mutual dissatisfaction until the young lady preferred a wooer of less dissimilar tastes and more serious intentions. They parted as friends and there is both emotion and grace in the letters Goethe wrote her after the breach.

Here, as in Frankfort, Goethe was a regular attendant at the theatre where he became personally acquainted with several prominent actors who gave him an insight into the nature of the stage. He was also initiated, chiefly by Behrisch, into the frivolous life of the city. Unattached as he was, he participated in various youthful dissipations with disquieting results to his health. He had for a long

while been extremely nervous, inclined to hypochondria, and had suffered from indigestion caused by the unaccustomed food and the heavy Merseburg beer (as an older man he attributed it to coffee, which he always disliked). Completely overcome by jealousy, "whimsical as a child cutting teeth," he was doubly susceptible to a life of frivolity. He woke up one night with a hemorrhage, hovered for days between life and death, and in course of time suffered from a tumor on the neck so that he had to be sent back home to Frankfort, an unwelcome convalescent—so far as his father was concerned. As to the exact nature of his illness, physicians such as Möbius, Freund, B. Fränkel and Kirstein, have endeavored to reach some definite conclusion, but no two of them agree.

## II

The first collection of Goethe's poetry that we possess was written during his stay in Leipzig, under the title *Annette*. The poems were copied by Behrisch in 1767; Goethe was then eighteen years old. Anna Katharina Schönkopf, the titular Annette, a trifle older than Goethe, was the daughter of the wine dealer with whom the young genius, together with a number of his comrades, was accustomed to take his midday meal. She had inspired the poems and to her they are dedicated.

These small bits of verse are highly characteristic of Goethe's earliest artistic period. Rococo through and through, they are entirely devoid of juvenile sensibility and pathos. They remind us much more of Wieland than of Klopstock; they stand infinitely

nearer to French than to German. They sing of erotics, pleasure, friendship, and virtue after the fashion of the eighteenth century before Rousseau had opened the sluices of bombast and declamation.

After all, had not the boy's education been half French? Count Thoranc, the leader of the troupe of French actors at Frankfort, the theatre of Molière and his successors at Leipzig had all helped to fill his mind and soul with French rococo culture. Also, in order to perfect himself in the French language, and thereby please his father, he wrote from time to time poems and letters to his sister and others, in a French that is far from excellent. There was to be sure in his epistolary style a youthful jollity that is quite German; there was, too, at times something affected and decidedly sentimental, as in the odes to Behrisch or in the letters to Auguste Stolberg. But when he wishes to be really creative, he returns to rococo forms, as in these poems.

The problem in eroticism demanding solution at this point is as follows: How shall the lover take his girl by surprise in order to get her into his power? It is merely a question of catching her off her guard and then consoling her; she must not be taken by storm or frightened. To that end he tells a little story (*Ziblis*) about how the girl fled from a horned sylvan god that was pursuing her, and how she allowed herself to be captured without resistance by a young man who first defended her and then caressed her.

The question is raised whether love always requires that the girl yield. In another short story entitled *Lyde* the negative answer is given. Amin succeeded in seducing Lyde and at first his rapture

was intense. But in course of time he grew weary of reiterated enjoyment and endeavored to get rid of the girl decently and in order. He pretended that he had to go on a journey and commended her to his friend who was to act as her guide and consoler. She neither felt nor manifested the slightest tinge of regret and seized the proffered opportunity with avidity. She became fervent; the friend became bold.

We are regaled first of all in the two stories with extended advice as to the most expeditious method of capturing coy young women. In the spirit of youthful frivolity, and with a goodly measure of charm, Goethe shows us, alternately in prose and verse, that the way to proceed is first to strike up a friendship; then it is relatively easy to go over to a kiss and a caress. But the pursuer must remember that he is always exposed to the danger of the girl's slipping away at the last moment. Then he explains how, with the help of Amor, she may be aroused and eventually befooled.

As counterpieces, there are two stories in verse. *Triumph der Tugend* bears a striking similarity to the two concerning Cupid's triumph. The familiar devices employed in the game of seduction re-occur, with this difference: At the close the girl appeals to the man's better nature, expounds the embrace as a quite serious affair, and brings it about that he retires.

And finally, in the humorous *Pygmalion*, the Greek legend is exploited in the flippant spirit of the eighteenth century. Pygmalion was a naïve dunderhead who had never pressed a woman to his bosom and consequently fell in love with a statue.

A friend extricated him from this ridiculous situation by securing him a girl of real flesh and warm blood. But unsophisticated as he was, he proceeded forthwith to marry her. Amor punished him for his persistent abstinence by giving him a wife.

All of this is youthful without being exactly jejune; it is buoyant and ingenious without an excess of emotional excitement. It is in short fetching. And it betrays a surprising equanimity for so young a mind.

In the little collection called *Leipziger Liederbuch*, as in *Annette*, there is very little display of passion either of love or jealousy; but there is an abundance of measure and moderation, levity and sensuousness, wit and mirth, and here and there a bit of precocious common-place. The poet gives sober counsel:

Du junger Mann, du junge Frau!  
Lebt nicht zu treu, nicht zu genau  
In enger Ehe!  
Die Eifersucht quält manches Haus  
Und trägt am Ende doch nichts aus  
Als doppelt Wehe.

He reveals too for so young a man a remarkable familiarity with the nature of women:

Das Mädchen wünscht von Jugend auf  
Sich hochgeehrt zu sehen.  
Sie ziehrt sich klein und wächst herauf  
In Pracht und Assembleen.  
Der Stolz verjagt die Triebe  
Der Wollust und der Liebe.

In the poem entitled *Der wahre Genuss*, the development of which is as natural as can be, he has

portrayed all the joy he experienced from his association with Käthchen Schönkopf. We read, in the Anacreontic style of the eighteenth century:

Für nichts besorgt als meine Freude,  
Für mich nur schön zu sein bemüht,  
Wollüstig nur an meiner Seite,  
Und sittsam wenn die Welt sie sieht;  
Dass unsrer Glück die Zeit nicht schade,  
Räumt sie kein Recht aus Schwachheit ein,  
Und ihre Gunst bleibt immer Gnade,  
Und ich muss immer dankbar sein.

In the verses from this period there breaks through every now and then a plain, simple, straightforward tone. There is, for example, the cordial greetings to his mother—that good mother whom he otherwise never in his whole life squarely compensated for the immense affection she had showered upon him.

Grüss mir die Mutter, sprich, sie soll verzeihen,  
Dass ich sie niemals grüssen liess, sag' ihr,  
Dass, was sie weiss, dass ich sie ehre. Sag's  
Dass nie mein kindlich Herz, von Liebe voll  
Die Schuldigkeit vergisst, und ehe soll  
Die Liebe nicht erkalten, eh ich selbst  
Erkalte.

In the poem entitled *Unbeständigkeit*, written in bright, rippling verses, the youth lays bare his flickering, flippant erotic nature. He lies in the babbling brook with outstretched arms, presses each oncoming wave lovingly to his breast, the one after the other with alternate longing. He plays the rôle of brother to his fellows. He informs them that should they ever be deceived, they should remember

that it is just as sweet to kiss the second as it was to kiss the first.

The Greco-Roman apparatus is frequently preserved. In *Die Spröde* there appears a Thyrsis, in *Die Bekehrte* a Damon, in *Die schöne Nacht* a fresh nature-sense penetrates the Roman mythology in a way that augurs quite well:

*Luna* bricht die Nacht der Eichen,  
Zephirs melden ihren Lauf,  
Und die Birken streun mit Neigen  
Ihr den süßsten Weihrauch auf.

We have a delightful bit of rococo in *Die Brautnacht*: It begins

Im Schlafgemach, entfernt vom Feste,  
Sitzt Amor dir getreu, und bebt,  
Dass nicht die List muthwill'ger Gäste  
Des Brautbetts Frieden untergräbt.

It closes:

Schnell hilft dir Amor sie entkleiden,  
Und ist nicht halb so schnell als du;  
Dann hält er schalkhaft und bescheiden  
Sich fest die beiden Augen zu.

That sounds like a charming text to a painting by Fragonard.

Goethe's first dramatic attempt, *Die Laune des Verliebten*, a paraphrasing of the scenes of jealousy between himself and Kätkchen Schönkopf with the addition of the parallel scenes between the other couple, Johann Adam Horn and Constance Breitkopf, is written in a similar though less excellent style.

The tiny drama is a pastoral in Alexandrines, that

is to say, in that unhappy metre into which the Germans, and after them their Northern neighbors, transformed the sprightly French Alexandrine verse. Lacking rhythmical sense for the undulating, alternating element in this verse, they substituted for it the tiresome iambic hexameter with the cæsura in the middle. It is the metre that Holberg introduced into Denmark with his *Peder Paars*.<sup>5</sup>

The action takes place between young ladies and gentlemen with Greco-French names: Eridon and Lamon, Amine and Eglé. They play the flute and the shawm. Lambs with bright red ribbons about their necks would look quite well in their immediate vicinity. In their hands they should have the shepherd's crook with bow attached. The playlet would have adapted itself very well to illustrations by Boucher, who died, incidentally, the year before it was written.

### III

Vastly different, however, is the drama that directly followed, *Die Mitschuldigen*. Its similarity is to be found only in the purely external, in that it is also written in the metre that the Germans call Alexandrine. But this drama is a picture of reality, of society, born of pessimism incorrigible, inharmonious throughout, inspired by a flippancy which in its essence is compounded of forbearing, tolerant

<sup>5</sup> Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754) wrote his comic epic entitled *Peder Paars* in 1719. It is a satire on the artificial poetry of Classicism with its "Lusiads" and "Henriads" and other creations in imitation of Homer. These are typical verses:

Ved Lilien paa Mark nu lignes maa en Qvinde;  
Hun ei arbeide vil, ei meere sye og spinde.

—TRANSLATOR.

contempt for human beings. In the leading character, Wolfgang—he was not yet twenty years old—apparently desires to lampoon himself and his foibles. Alceste, a well-to-do young man, pays violent court to a young woman. She is kindly disposed to him, but married and settled, though unhappily. In this character who, like Kätkchen Schönkopf, is the daughter of an innkeeper, he portrays at once feminine amiability and feminine weakness. Irrevocably bent on securing a husband, she stoops to a wretched, characterless person so soon as it becomes evident to her that all of her more prominent suitors are making her only left-handed proposals.

After a few years of absence, Alceste has returned to the town where the subsequent action takes place; he is received into the inn owned by Sophie's father. On finding her married to Söller, a reveller and a gambler, he feels his old yearnings reappear. He has lived there for a considerable time without coming nearer her. Finally, as Söller is planning an evening at a masquerade, Alceste inveigles Sophie into a nocturnal rendezvous. With a modicum of reluctance she yields. But on that very same night her husband decides to rob Alceste. The father (an imitation, by the way, of the inquisitive host in Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm*) sneaks up into Alceste's room in order to pry into a letter that Alceste had received on that afternoon. In this way all of the characters find themselves in the same room on the same night. Alceste and Sophie keep their tryst, and indeed quite tenderly, but owing to Sophie's relative reserve the affair ends without substantial results. Söller, convinced of his marital misfortune and intending to use this as a

foil in case of detection, steals a comfortable sum of money from Alceste's strong box.

When, on the next morning, the young cavalier misses his money, the very money he had planned to spend on Sophie, she at once suspects her father. Was not his wax taper found in the young man's room? The father in turn suspects the daughter so soon as he learns of her visit to the room and immediately conveys his suspicion to Alceste, whose reasoning is natural, if unkind, in that he concludes that if Sophie has really taken the money she has no right to boast of her virtue and stir up trouble. But when he treats her in accordance with his ugly conjecture, he offends her and does her an injustice. At last he comes to see that no one other than the reprobate Söller is the thief. When Söller, however, makes it plain that Alceste's treatment of him is no better than his own treatment of the well-to-do young man, the leading character realizes that what the situation demands is forbearance and indulgence.

The diminutive, and unsatisfactory, drama is constructed with considerable dramatic ability. It is evident that the author had written it after attending many dramatic performances and reading many plays. The form is genuine but old-fashioned, not only by reason of its numerous monologues and asides but also because these asides are at times answered—one would fancy they were supposed to be inaudible—by the person hidden behind the scenes. And several times, as in the case of the German romanticists later on, the spectators have something to say from the stalls.

We have the drama in three redactions, the first of which begins with the second act. The second

complete redaction, likewise from 1769, is the freshest and boldest, filled as it is with blunt, Molièresque expressions, which were afterwards deleted, along with such brusque remarks as the following, made by Alceste to Söller:

Er lässt der jungen Frau das kalte Bett allein.

In the revised edition this is changed so as to read

Er lässt die junge Frau zur Winterzeit allein.

In both of the complete editions there are quite a few allusions to contemporary events. In the first, as also later in *Stella*, reference is made to the Corsican Paoli's conflict with the French, the unrest in Poland, Turkey's declaration of war against Russia, and the comet, seen in October, 1768. In the second edition, written in the following year, there is an allusion to America's trouble with England and the sale of soldiers by German princes that followed, to the illness of Frederick the Great and other events. The drama was in short a photograph of his own affairs as well as those of the surrounding world.

## CHAPTER III

### FRANKFORT: FRÄULEIN VON KLETTENBERG— STRASSBURG: HERDER

BROKEN in health and weak of courage, the young man returned to his ancestral home in Frankfort to recuperate under his mother's loving treatment. She rejoiced at the thought of having her son with her again; she had missed him so much; she was soon to lose him again; and from then on she was to see him with depressing infrequency. His sister Cornelia likewise was glad to have him home. For three years uninterruptedly she had been obliged to bear her father's sternness and inconsistency all alone. Now he aired his dissatisfaction on his son who had returned from the university without having taken his law examinations, without even a thorough grounding in law, and in addition to all of this so exhausted from illness that he had to be treated leniently.

Young Wolfgang remained in Frankfort from the autumn of 1768 to the spring of 1770. From the very first he felt terribly ill at ease. He longed for Leipzig, especially for Oeser's home and all that Oeser had meant to him: love for an ideal of beauty and sound judgment as to artistic values. In Frankfort he suffered "a famine of good taste." In perpetual feud with his father, he tried to find consolation in general reading. He took up Wie-

land whose *Agathon* and *Musarion* glorified a sort of Hellenism and whose style was that very same erotic rococo which had won him, heart and soul, in Leipzig. Following out the spirit of Wieland he struck up a love affair with one of Cornelia's friends, Charitas Meixner from Worms. She was a few months older than Cornelia, had been married in the same year, and like her died, 1777, in childbed.

In the year 1768 she was eighteen years old. Even when she was but sixteen, Goethe had doted on her and, after the fashion of youth, unable to keep his affair to himself, told his friends all about it. In a letter to Augustin Trapp, dated June 2, 1766, he writes, in his French:

O vous savez trop, que Worms me tient au cœur. Vous connaissez ma passion pour la belle Charitas que vous l'avez crue le plus fort motif de m'amener à Vous écrire en me donnant par Stern le doux espoir de me faire entendre des nouvelles qui touchent de plus près votre charmante nièce.

Ecrivez moi! Que fait l'enfant autant aimé  
Se souvient-il de moi? Ou m'a il oublié?  
Ah ne me cachez rien, qu'il m'élève ou m'accable,  
Un poignard de sa main me serait agréable.

It is surprising that Goethe, perhaps because *Kind* in German is neuter gender, fancies that in French one must use *il* in referring to a girl; and the combination *m'a il* leaves a distinctly bad taste in the mouth. The long prose sentence is a model of stylistic awkwardness, though there can be no doubt as to the warmth of the inspiration. And now, over two years having elapsed and the fair Charitas having become more mature by that much, the attraction returned in reënforced form.

Rich in contrasts as young Goethe's nature was, his illness called forth at the same time a decided inclination to piety and mysticism. He studied chemistry and cabala, alchemy and magic; he thought that a pietistic physician had saved his life by some cryptic, miraculous method; he sought after miracles; he was inclined to believe in them, like his Faust after him. He steeped himself in Arnold's history of the church and heretics, a book in which the sanctimonious historian explains the weaknesses of human kind as manifestations of diabolic interference.

He came especially under the immediate influence of that particular one of his mother's friends whom she admired the most and revered without qualification, Fräulein Susanna Katharina von Klettenberg (1723-1774). Frau Aja, bright and cheerful as she was, had a pronounced inclination toward something higher than drab daily life and house-keeping; this more exalted occupation she found in the piety that was preached and practiced by her friend, at whose bedside she sat, steadfast and deeply moved, in the hour of death.

Susanna von Klettenberg was delicately formed and well developed, and had a cordial, natural disposition, which was all the more prepossessing in her case since she herself came of a distinguished family and associated with prominent people. She was always carefully dressed despite the Moravian simplicity of her costumes. She had been influenced by the leading Pietists, Spener and Francke, though she invariably spoke with noticeable reservation of Count Zinzendorf, the real founder of the Moravian Society. She must have made an unusual

impression because of her purity of heart and innocence; she must have been endowed with a goodly measure of genial and captivating superiority. It was under her influence that young Wolfgang wrote, in his sixteenth year, in the pious dialect of that time, the poem on Christ's descent into Hell. This situation explains, too, the inscription: *Auf Verlangen entworfen*. It was also obviously under her influence that the twenty-year-old Wolfgang, after a violent recurrence of his illness, attended (1769) the Moravian Synod at Marienborn where he was, however, almost repelled by what he saw.

In a warm letter of August 26, 1770, Wolfgang reports to Susanna von Klettenberg, in a tone of youthful freedom, concerning his association with the pious people of the neighborhood. He writes: "I really applied myself to them in an attempt to appreciate them, but it seems as if it was not to be: I could not live with them on the right sort of footing. They are so thoroughly tiresome that my vivacity could not stand them. They are exclusively a people of mediocre intelligence, who thought their first rational thought with their first religious experience, and they fancy that this is everything, for beyond religion they know nothing." He finds them vain, churchly, and punctilious.

It is plain that by this time Goethe has been freed; his feelings are no longer those of his adolescent days. Constant reading of the Bible had not merely opened his eyes to the Oriental way of feeling and Oriental brilliancy of color (as is revealed even in his old age in the *West-Oestlicher Divan*); it had given him also that living interest in religious problems such as appears in the, after all, half rational-

istic essays from his youth entitled *Brief des Pastors* and *Zwo Biblische Fragen*. At any rate, the influence of Susanna von Klettenberg on Goethe's being was so strong that he felt impelled to portray her in his great novel, where, as is well known, she is immortalized in *Die Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*.

That the subject was deserving of Goethe's profound interest, is beyond all doubt. But the letters on which the portrayal of her is based are lost. Goethe most likely destroyed them, just as in all probability he destroyed the letters on which the first part of *Werther* is based and to which this part really owes its undying freshness. So far as the notes from Susanna von Klettenberg's own hand are concerned, and the notes of her conversation that Goethe may have had at his disposal, these are also lost. And we must say that the *Reliquien* left by her and published by J. M. Lappenberg in 1849 (on the hundredth anniversary of Goethe's birth) do not justify her renown. Her moral and religious treatises on friendship, Christian friendship, steadfastness in friendship, undignified flirting with friends, on Heaven and divine joy,—all are thoroughly tiresome, pious tracts. Her letters, few in number, are in general the letters of a Protestant nun. Her poems, which are nearly all hymns to Jesus, possess but little poetic worth. The best of them, and the only secular one, is the poem *An die Spindel*. She prefers the spinning wheel to the brush. That individual who no longer values splendor and beauty, who does not even care about praise, does not feel impelled to reproduce such things. She prefers the spinning wheel to the pen. What

should she do with the symbols of thought? She thinks more quickly without them. The last verses run:

Komm, Spindel, komm, ich kann nicht müssig sitzen,  
Das Nichtsthun ist mir Qual und Tod,  
Sollt ich mit feiner Arbeit mich erhitzen,  
Das machte mir die Augen roth.

Doch Bücher! Ja, die hätt' ich bald vergessen,  
Sehr wichtig dem, der sie für nöthig hält;  
Die Mäuse wollen meine fressen,  
Da hab' ich sie in Schrank gestellt.

Komm, Spindel, komm, froh soll die Hand dich lenken,  
Du lässt mir Kopf und Herze frei;  
Empfindungsvoll kann ich da fühlend denken,  
Das Andre ist doch Narrethei.

So she is done with all things secular; she will abandon books and eschew paintings. It has been impossible for me to derive a single grain of nourishment from what she wrote; but she lives for all time as a transfigured being in and by virtue of Goethe's art.

## II

Goethe was suddenly torn loose from all the things which in reality accorded so little with his deeper nature: pietistic brooding, magical whims, mystical experiments, and flirtations with pretty girls, including the one from Worms. In 1770, his father sent him to Strassburg, where he himself had been a student. It was a piece of genuine good fortune for Wolfgang: He was once more liberated from the narrowness of Imperial Frankfort, and

placed in a city where the essential characteristics of two great nations met. He was to live for a while in a city that was at once French and German; in a city with an old Germanic past and new French present.

Just as in Leipzig, he soon made the acquaintance of a number of older and younger men; his table companions were all excellent and interesting personalities. There was one man nearly fifty years old, Justice Salzmann, a thoughtful individual of good taste, well fitted to become the confidant of a young genius with big ideas in his head and acute pangs in his heart. There was the mystic and physician Jung-Stilling who, by reason of his sound learning and genuine piety, was quite instructive to a youth of Goethe's type. Moreover, he took it upon himself to defend Goethe with vigor and no little audacity when he saw others casting supercilious glances at him because of his wig and other slight eccentricities of dress. And there was the valiant Lerse, whose name has been preserved and whose character has been immortalized in *Götz von Berlichingen*. But the most important of all the acquaintances the young Goethe made was that of Johann Gottfried Herder.

Herder was then physically ill and spiritually dejected. He was suffering from a fistula in one of his eyes. In order to remove it it was found necessary to give the tear duct a natural outlet through the nose. To do this an incision in the lacrimal sack and presumably a piercing of the nose bone had to be undergone. Convalescence was to be a matter of three weeks.

Herder had come to Strassburg in September

1770. In the spring of 1771 he writes, after repeated and unsuccessful operations, that instead of one incision and one boring through the nose there had been twenty incisions and two hundred dressings of the wound, while the three weeks of convalescence had been extended to six months. And after all this pain, annoyance and expense, the eye was worse than when he first arrived.

On his arrival Herder had given up his position with the Prince of Eutin. As the Prince's travelling companion, he had stayed for a while in Darmstadt, where he had made the acquaintance of Caroline Flachsland, who later became his wife. Her parents were dead and she was living, under economic pressure, in the home of her inconsiderate brother-in-law. Though herself destined to become in course of time eccentric, gloomy, and ill tempered, she was then tall, blue-eyed, of a childlike cheerfulness, and a transcendental enthusiast withal. She cherished a reverential love for the serious scholar whose disposition was not as happy as one would have expected from a man of his age, though there was no doubt as to the genuineness of his affection for her. He felt, however, that his position was far too uncertain for him to ask her to become formally engaged to him. And since he wrote to her not infrequently, in accordance with his custom, in the tone of a seasoned schoolmaster, didactically and sarcastically, she would have broken off her relation to him with small regret. She was indeed won over only with difficulty, and as the result of infinite beseeching and promising on his part.

Herder was despondent; he found Strassburg detestable; he visited no one. But the fame which he

enjoyed even at that time was drawing young men to him. Two or three of these came to see him almost every day. One of these was Wolfgang Goethe, then twenty-one years of age. Herder was twenty-six; but he had already accomplished so much. In Königsberg Kant had drawn his attention to Rousseau. He ardently dedicated himself to the paradox that man is good by nature but spoiled by civilization; he accepted with equal zeal the idea of a return to nature. This coincided perfectly with the influence he had previously received from another of his fellow-townsmen, Hamann, whose position as a prophet impressed him, and in whose muddy writings he had found the sentence that poetry is the mother tongue of mankind, and that its origin was coeval with the origin of language itself.

By virtue of the Germanic admiration for the dark as being at once the deep, he was celebrated by young talents as a seer and a magician. It must in truth be conceded that he fought Enlightenment to the benefit of belief in Christian revelation, which the young thinkers had cast aside as a worn out doctrine. People had become heartily tired of Enlightenment. That which was bathed in light no longer satisfied the coming generation, yearning as it then was for the mysterious in which the tangible has its roots. Hamann had taught Herder that the roots of poetry and language are intertwined; the original language was set down as an imitation of toneful and restless nature. Language was something that had grown naturally; it had evolved; it was not the product of speculation. Nor was poetry the creation of a few highly cultured private per-

sons; it was not the work of a few clever people. It was a world gift, a folk gift.

From Königsberg Herder went to Riga, whence he sailed for France. He remained in France half a year, six weeks of which were spent in Paris. He became acquainted there with such leading and brilliant intellects as d'Alembert, Barthélemy, and Diderot. He was especially captivated by the latter. Herder saw in him at once the modern Plato and the modern Terence. Diderot in turn was ultra-enthusiastic about the natural, and about natural morals. If Goethe was later influenced by Diderot as well as by Rousseau, it was Herder, whose critical writings had even then made him famous, that pointed the way.

Sick, dejected, at loggerheads with his sweetheart, full of seething ideas that were after all mature to a certain degree, already accustomed to admiration, Herder accepted the visits of Wolfgang with complete lack of ecstasy. He was poles removed from seeing genius in him, and never said a word in any of his letters, either in those to Caroline Flachsland or in those to Merck, about the studious young man who visited him as a rule every morning and every evening, and sometimes stayed with him the whole day. Not until March 1772, when Caroline made the acquaintance of Wolfgang, did Herder write her a few lines concerning him:

Goethe is really a good fellow, though exceedingly light-headed and sparrowish, for which I have frankly reproached him. He was at times the only one who visited me during my imprisonment in Strassburg, and I believe I can say without any self-praise that I left some impressions on him that will prove fruitful in the days to come.

Imagine for a minute these two men standing face to face in the little room in Herder's hotel! Herder, with his powdered hair in round curls, oval face, big clerical nose, under his black, heavy eyebrows, a pair of coal black eyes, one of which is red and inflamed; his dress is black, worn, home-made; over it he wears a thin black silk mantle the ends of which he has stuck in his pockets.

Opposite him stands Wolfgang Goethe, an elegantly clad youth, with his receding forehead, his hair smooth and combed straight back, ending in a little pig-tail, his pointed, seeking nose, his longish face with the beautiful mouth, his charming brown eyes with their penetrating glance—a questioning, yearning, overflowing universe in eternal unrest.

He reminds his associates of a sparrow or a woodpecker; he is always hopping about, liable to cry out at any moment, and inclined to mystifications and practical jokes. Jung-Stilling portrays his first impression of him. He has large clear eyes, a magnificent forehead and beautiful form; he entered the room rather dauntlessly and assumed the leadership without first trying to see whether he could gain it or not; he almost rolled his eyes inside out at the individual at whom he chanced to be looking. A few years later Jung-Stilling pictures him as he appeared in Elberfeld: "He dances around the table, makes faces, and conducts himself so oddly and childishly that the people in Elberfeld doubt whether he is entirely sane."

There was something youthfully presumptuous in him. He was accustomed to being coddled and was considered by many as being a sort of prodigy. And

now he met in the distempered and peevish Herder, for the first time in his life, a being whose superiority expressed itself in mockery. Goethe tells him about his collection of seals and is laughed at. Herder treats him like a schoolboy. Goethe says nothing about his many distracting occupations, his studies in chemistry and anatomy, and his mystic-cabalistic investigations. Herder pokes fun at Wolfgang's Latin Classics, beautifully bound and carefully arranged but unread. He taunts him by saying that all the Latin he knows he has learned from Spinoza —a fact which shows how early in life Goethe busied himself with that thinker who was destined later to have a decisive influence upon his life and works. On the occasion of a loan of some books Herder plays fast and loose with Goethe's name:

Der von Göttern du stammst, von Gothen oder vom Kothe,  
Goethe, sende sie mir!

Goethe speaks of this with bitterness. We dislike puns on our names as much as we dislike having our names forgotten.

Young Wolfgang had admired Herder's equanimity during the various operations, all of which were extremely painful, though not one word of complaint was ever heard from the immortal patient. He felt humiliated by his elder's superior bearing; yet he was inspired; Herder's great characteristics, his intuitive insight and abundant information, worked on him like magic.

It was perfectly natural that Herder, repelled as he was by his own youthful conceits in Goethe, just as Goethe eighteen years later saw, to his displeasure, his own juvenile exaggerations reappear in

Schiller, should treat Goethe as a mere boy. He was living now "in that cave of loneliness where the soul is stamped and the character confirmed." It was not less natural that Goethe thought he had met the Sun whose Planet he was called to be. He felt like Jacob wrestling with the angel of the Lord.

Herder was not content simply to give him new ideas concerning the nature of poetry and language; he completely transformed his inner being. Spiritually Goethe stood, as is well known, under the supremacy of French rococo. Herder's own development had been French to the extent that he was profoundly influenced by the worshippers of nature, by Rousseau and Diderot. But when he conceived of them as the opposites of old Gallicism, he felt that he was in sharp national contrast to what is French, that is to say, to rococo. French literature appeared to him old and aristocratic, artificial and barren. Its criticism was negative; it sought after mere correctness. Its philosophy was flat and inadequate. Even Lessing, despite the fact that he was a disciple of Diderot, had felt opposed to French.

Goethe drank in these opinions and soon found himself in a complete mental right-about-face. His very stay in Alsace, which was half French, did much to Germanize him. He was vexed when his comrades derided him because of his imperfect French. He and his companions tried to return to German brusqueness of expression. And while the two passionate daughters of his dancing teacher were quarreling with each other as to which one should have the beautiful young man, he fell in love with the German preacher's daughter out at Sesenheim.

Intimidated by Herder's superior irony, he never dared show him *Die Mitschuldigen*; just as little did it occur to him to show Herder the beautiful lyric poems he had begun to write. But what Herder taught him intoxicated him. Though Herder's own poetry was of no special value, and though he wrote of his love affairs in high-flown, Klopstockian phraseology, his all-embracing critical mind could correctly appraise a species of poetry that was poles removed from his own—folk poetry in all of its forms.

He was not the real modern discoverer of folk poetry. Before he had been enraptured by it, Percy's collection of Old English and Scottish Ballads had appeared. But Herder is the first man who, by reason of his knowledge of comparative literature, could unite the folk poetry of all nations in one study. In 1778 and 1779, his first edition of ingenious translations appeared. It contained ballads from Greenland, Lapland, and Estonia, songs from Livonia and Lithuania, collected on the spot, lays from Tartary and Vandalia, Sicilian rhymes and Spanish romances, French, English, and Scottish ballads, lyrics from Shakespeare's dramas, songs from Ossian, for the genuineness of which he naïvely broke a lance, Eddie songs and Bardic poems, German songs from the Empire as well as from Switzerland, and even plays from barbarian nations. To the regret of Caroline Flachsland, he lost his liking for Klopstock, praised Ossian at the expense of his contemporary Gerstenberg, and valued a song from Lapland more highly in the original than in Ewald von Kleist's imitation.

Herder invariably proceeded from the artificial

and over-cultivated to the simple and naïve; he always placed that which grows above that which is grown. It is he who introduces Goethe to Northern folk poetry: He translates the Danish ballad, *Jeg lagde mit Hoved til Elverhøj*, and the ballad on the daughter of the king of the elves, entitled *Hr. Olaf, han rider*. From the latter Goethe derives his idea of the king of the elves. We see this appropriation in *Der Erlkönig*, which of course should be *Der Elfenkönig*. That Herder was not exactly a master of Danish is shown by the following verses:

Die Fischlein schwammen in heller Flut  
Mit ihren Feinden spelend.

That is supposed to be a reproduction of:

Alle smaa Fiske i Floden svam,  
De leged med deres Finne.

*Finne* is confused with *Fjende*, the former meaning "fins," the latter "enemies."

For Goethe this is the hour of fructification. Herder did not believe that he was capable of genuine inspiration; Goethe will show him. He roams about on foot through Alsace and collects twelve unknown folk songs just as God made them. They are for Herder, for Herder and no one else. He will not permit even his most intimate comrades to copy them; but young girls who have found favor in his eyes shall learn to sing them according to the old melodies.

What such songs were destined to mean for Goethe's poetry is readily seen by comparing *Röschen auf der Heide* and Goethe's *Heidenröslein*. The first two stanzas contain almost exactly the

same words; in the third a few lines have been changed, but the change is a stylistic modification by a facile hand.

Folk song:

Es sah ein Knab' ein Röslein stehn,  
Röslein auf der Heiden,  
Sah, es war so frisch und schön,  
Und blieb stehn es anzusehn—  
Und stand in süßen Freuden—  
Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,  
Röslein auf der Heiden.

Goethe:

Sah ein Knab' ein Röslein stehn,  
Röslein auf der Heiden,  
War so jung und morgenschön,  
Lief er schnell es nah zu sehn,  
Sah's mit vielen Freuden.  
Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,  
Röslein auf der Heiden.

What Goethe appropriates in this way, he invariably revises but little, though sufficiently. Such is the case with his *Nähe des Geliebten*, taken from Friederike Brun, and the two Suleika songs, taken from Marianne von Willemer. Let us, however, not overlook the vast difference between this naïve poetry and the old-fashioned, precocious lyrics of his youth. Rococo no longer exists for him.

Macpherson's publication of the so-called songs of Ossian more than anything else drew Herder's attention to ancient folk poetry. The same thing happened to him that happened to nearly all of his contemporaries: the melodies of this artificial nightingale sounded genuine. *Ossian* was first made accessible to the Germans through the crack-brained

translation by Denis. Herder was ultra-enthusiastic over the *authentic* Ossian—as if there had really been one. As everybody now knows, Macpherson had given his work the semblance of ancient poetry by the skillful use of some old Irish and Scottish songs. He was a genuine poet who delighted in appearing as a poetic mystifier.

This Bardic poetry, which was fresher than Klopstock's, was a somewhat strained expression for exalted feelings, melancholy longings and memories, more modern than antique, altogether an affected and hazy temperamental art. But this Aeolian harp music awakened, somewhat as did Lamartine's later in France, the long since exsiccated appreciation for natural poetry. Herder infected Goethe with his inspiration for Ossian. It gripped him as it was to grip Bonaparte twenty years later who ranked Ossian even higher than Homer.

Goethe translated, very freely, a long selection of Ossian—Colma's, Ryno's, and Alpin's lyric-dramatic outbreak—in emotional prose. This he thoroughly revised and touched up and incorporated some of it in the second part of *Werther's Leiden*, which thus came to stand under the star of Ossian just as the sturdier and more wholesome first part stood under the star of Homer. The section beginning with *Stern der dämmernden Nacht!* harmonizes beautifully with Werther's infinite melancholy at the thought of approaching separation. The last words, not found in the original translation, which are read by Werther with tearful eyes, run as follows:

The tree speaks: Why wakest thou me, air of Spring?  
Thou lovest and sayest: I bedew with drops from Heaven!

But the time of my withering is near; near is the storm that carries my leaves along with it. To-morrow the wanderer will come; he will come who saw me in my beauty; his eyes will seek me far over the fields; but he will seek me in vain.

It is remarkable what a short span of time lies between the poems published under the collective title of *Annette*, and these translations after Ossian that sound so full and rich. If we compare the short piece written under the rubric of *Darthulas Grabgesang* with the Danish rendering of F. L. Mynster, Goethe's power and naturalness become at once apparent.

## CHAPTER IV

### RELATION TO SHAKESPEARE — RELATION TO GOTHIC STYLE—RELATION TO GREEK AN- TIQUITY—RELATION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

IT was also Herder who introduced Goethe to Shakespeare and elicited the young man's ebullient enthusiasm. Goethe had, to be sure, read the great Britisher while still in Leipzig, both in the original and in Wieland's prose translation. There is no doubt at all but that he was mightily impressed; but he studied Shakespeare at that time in the spirit and after the fashion of a foreigner.

Now he is carried away by him. He himself tells us that the junior club in Strassburg took upon itself the task of speaking in Shakespearean phraseology, in the style of Mercutio and the clowns. We have the best evidence of his jejune study in his address on Shakespeare's birthday, 1772. At this time Goethe cannot even spell the Englishman's name; he Germanicizes it. The title reads *Zum Schäkespears Tag*. But he cries out with bold familiarity: "Schäkespear, my friend, if you were still among us, I could live nowhere except with you. How willingly would I play the subordinate rôle of Py-

lades if you were Orestes!" His inspiration has now become so thoroughly German that it is simply the obverse side of his contempt for French. In contradistinction to the French, he praises the tragic art of the Greeks and the drama of Shakespeare, which is "a beautiful cabinet of curiosities wherein the history of the world passes in review before our eyes." His address *Zum Schäkespears Tag* is nothing more nor less than an outburst of immature enthusiasm, sincerely felt, and yet after all only an echo of Herder's erudition. It is fresh and warm; that is its sole virtue. It reveals precious little originality and is, so far as the theme is concerned, remarkably devoid of thought. Goethe cries Nature! Nature! Shakespeare's characters are nature, a thing of dismay to the lax and inexperienced. The young Wolfgang confesses openly that he has thought very little about Shakespeare and, truth to tell, feels and imagines rather than thinks. What he especially owes to Shakespeare is the fact that he has liberated coming poets from the nefarious restraint of rules. Since he has read Shakespeare the unity of place seems to him painfully prison-like, while the unities of time and action are simply onerous fetters on the imagination. He has leaped out into unmeasured space and become conscious for the first time in his life that he has hands and feet.

And then there follows, *à la* Herder, a general diatribe against the French drama. The Greek drama, accepted by the French as their model, was unapproachable; it would be easier for a Marquis to imitate Alcibiades than for Corneille to follow Sophocles.

The Greeks receive the young orator's inspired homage. He says rather beautifully and simply:

First as an intermezzo in divine service, then with solemn political application, the tragedy presented a few great actions of their ancestors to the people with the pure simplicity of perfection, and aroused whole and complete sensations in their souls, for the people themselves, as a nation, were great and complete. And in what sort of souls! In Greek souls! I cannot say just what that means but I feel it and for the sake of brevity I simply refer to Sophocles and Homer and Theocritus who have taught me to feel it.

All French tragedies are parodies. This is said by Goethe who, in this case, babbles according to Lessing's unjust judgments, and who, thirty years later, translates Voltaire's *Mahomet* and *Tancred*.

Shakespeare, on the contrary, creates real men and real women. He vied with Prometheus, formed human beings after the fashion of Prometheus, only on a colossal scale, so that they are occasionally misunderstood. But Goethe cries out: Nothing is so much nature as Shakespeare's men and women.

The French are once more hauled over the coals. All French dramatists, and the Germans who have been infected by them, even Wieland (through whom Goethe first became acquainted with Shakespeare) have, in comparison with the great Englishman, reaped but little honor. Voltaire is especially attacked. Voltaire, who always made a profession of calumniating majesties [he did, as everybody knows, everything but that], has likewise conducted himself as a genuine Thersites. "If I were Ulysses his back would smart under my sceptre."

Goethe hardly suspected then that in 1805, in the notes to Diderot's *Rameaus Neffe*, he would

praise Voltaire as the cleverest of all French writers and ascribe to him forty-five grand characteristics.

## II

In the essay on German architecture, entitled *Von Deutscher Baukunst*, the reader is wellnigh inundated with a stream of juvenile inspiration and acute jingoism. It is really a hymn in praise of Erwin von Steinbach, the architect of the Strassburg Cathedral. It was written in the autumn of 1772. And here also, the rococo that once filled Goethe's soul is overcome, this time by Gothic.

The young man, manifestly under Herder's influence, who, be it noted, had but the faintest sort of appreciation of plastic art, was profoundly moved by the Cathedral. He had not simply examined it carefully from the sidewalk; he had not simply climbed the tower like so many visitors after him, including Jens Baggesen;<sup>6</sup> he had not merely looked at it. He had studied the very plans and drawings so carefully that he divined details of architecture that were never completed, such as the four minor towers with the larger one in the centre. And yet this essay contains virtually nothing bearing on the real spirit of Gothic.

The treatise reveals a strong and reassuring feeling for the fact that the home of Gothic is the North, where the art of the South will always seem

<sup>6</sup> Jens Baggesen (1764-1826) started on his first journey to Germany in 1789. From Strassburg he went to Switzerland where he became intimately associated with Lavater. Brandes refers to his climbing the cathedral tower merely by way of showing his willingness to do anything—once. His admiration for Immanuel Kant was so great, for a while, that he adopted the name of "Jens Immanuel Baggesen."

—TRANSLATOR.

out of place. It gives a clean-cut impression of the unity of the Cathedral, a point which had given rise to heated debate on the part of some who contended that its unity was strained and broken by the excess of decorations. It elevated the very term *Gothik* to a place of honor and dignity where it had formerly been a word of scorn and abuse.

Inseparable from the noble passion of the monograph is, however, a great deal of national flag-waving. Herder had indoctrinated Goethe with a nationalism which in a few years was to appear foreign to his disciple. He pours out his heart in detestation of the art of the Romance peoples; nor does even Greek come off any better in so far as it fails to meet German requirements.

He declaims, and with reason, against the Madeleine Church in Paris with its pseudo-Greek columns, the building of which had been begun about twelve years previously. He had never seen the Madeleine—it was then far from completion and Goethe never was in Paris—but he disliked it *à priori*. Rodin, who understands Gothic cathedrals infinitely better than Goethe, dislikes it even more cordially. No man who appreciates art at all can prefer it to Notre Dame in Paris. Goethe does not go so far that he, after the fashion of Rodin, would prefer the Gothic Cathedral to the Parthenon. Had it fallen to his lot, as had been the case with Renan, to stand on the Acropolis, he would have been able to offer up his own prayer to Pallas Athene. Each of the two types of architecture, Antique and Gothic, is dependent upon climatic conditions. Gothic arises in dark and foggy countries. Its towers pointing to heaven, its naves and cross aisles, excavated

from the depths as it were, arise out of the necessity of seeking light up above the clouds and catch it in the corners, or of gently lighting up the falling shades. Antique art, on the contrary, with its smooth upper surfaces, its sharp corners, and its scarcity of windows, is a daughter of blinding superfluous light which refuses to be caught, for that it is much too strong, and which disports itself unmerrily in the presence of any subtlety or dexterity, which it first reveals and then rejects.

At this stage of his development, Goethe did not sense the relativity of ideals. Nor did he realize that Gothic architecture was the expression of an intense religious feeling which had liberated itself from the Roman Church, otherwise he would hardly have been so hostile to this style later on. He did not understand that Gothic was an expression of the same imagination that resulted in the repeated Crusades of Louis the Pious, that it was the expression of the profundity and captiousness of the Scholastics, and of Mariolatry, which made piety an affair of sacred passion. Still less did he appreciate the fact that it was France that had taken the lead in this matter—France, the land where knighthood had especially flourished, and where the impulse to adventure, superinduced by the Crusades, had been especially vigorous. In its origin Gothic was, as is now generally known, entirely an art of northern France.

So little did Goethe even suspect all this that, in his newly awakened hatred of rococo, he had his Frenchman face the Cathedral of Strassburg, babble “Childishness,” and point with pride to his *Dose à la Grecque*.

Goethe ridicules the Italians, the neo-French prophets who have a kind word for columns. Against columns as constituent parts of a modern structure he is intensely embittered. What he says against in-walled columns is true enough. But so far does the later worshipper of columns go in his aversion that he passionately scorns Bernini's beautiful colonnade in the front of St. Peter's, and triumphantly disposes of it by saying that the Roman plebeians, at least he has been told so, commit nuisance there. "It is Mother Nature," he says, "who causes this state of affairs. She despises the irrelevant and useless, so that you turn your eyes away and hold your nose in the presence of this miracle."

Of Gothic however he says: "That is German architecture, our architecture. The Italians cannot boast of an architecture that is really their own, and much less the French." The Italians have developed then no architecture of their own while the French are to admit that such originality as they appear to have is really German.

Let us notice, in parenthesis, the young author's delight in blunt, vulgar expressions. This style, he feels, he has learned from Shakespeare; it is anti-French first of all, and then it is German. But let us not be deceived by the poem written at the time, *So ist der Held, der mir gefällt:*

Hoch ist sein Tritt, fest ist sein Schritt,  
Edler Deutschen Füsse gleiten nit.

Nor by the verses:

Wieland soll nicht mehr mit seinesgleichen  
Edlen Mut von eurer Brust verscheuchen.

This is meant merely as a parody on Georg Jacobi's view point.

He had latterly written (February 16, 1770) to an acquaintance in Leipzig regarding Wieland:

To depict the character, the moods of this man, is not our affair. Of great men no one should speak except him who is himself so great that he can survey, that he can look over, the great men in question.

On February 20, 1770, he wrote to another acquaintance:

After Oeser and Shakespeare, Wieland is the only man whom I can look upon as my real teacher. Others had shown me where I was wrong; he showed me what was right, and how to do things right.

Wieland is then still precious in his sight; but he is not destined long to remain so.

So long as Gothic style harmonizes with Goethe's frame of mind, unbiased critical appreciation is impossible for him. But even in this preliminary Gothic period Goethe creates works that tower high up above the general level of world literature. It is not simply his *Gottfried von Berlichingen* that is Gothic; his pre-Weimarian *Faust* belongs in the same category. In a narrow, high-arched Gothic room Faust sits at his desk; the cathedral in which Gretchen hears the voice of the evil spirit is Gothic. In these oldest scenes of *Faust*, in the Gretchen tragedy, Goethe ascends to regions inaccessible to contemporary weapons of attack.

But the young genius has not yet quite reached that point; he has merely laid the foundation for it.

He still cultivates force with a sanctimonious vengeance; he expresses himself in a quite violent way; he fishes for energetic phrases such as we find in the letter to Herder where he says: "We two must hold together, for the world is so full of shysters (*Scheisskerle*)."<sup>1</sup> In *Gottfried*, inspired by Herder, Elizabeth says:

Charity is indeed a noble virtue; but it is the exclusive privilege of strong souls. People who are charitable because they cannot help it are no better than people who cannot retain their urine.

Such is the outcome of the naturalism which in the case of young Wolfgang follows in the wake of his supposed Shakespearean style, his visionary enthusiasm for Gothic, and his Teutomania.

### III

Herder himself, however, drove the youthful genius into the arms of that particular people who were to prove the most dangerous to his excessive nationalism, and his predilection for Gothic art—the Greeks of long ago. It was Herder who first showed him their real greatness; he introduced his disciple to them in a way that was quite different from the one Wieland had employed in his flippant *Musarion* and other works of a similar nature. In these works by Wieland a stoic is made to look askance when a pretty young woman exposes her bosom or legs. Nor does Herder follow the method of Winckelmann, who had talked to Goethe about statues while Herder discusses poetry.

In accordance with his fundamental way of look-

ing at ancient things, Herder imbued Goethe with the error that Homer, who was in actuality the aristocratic court poet of his time, was primitive folk poetry. Now he saw the Homeric heroes before him like "freely wading storks." And for a long while the Greeks remain the favorite theme both of his thoughts and of his representations.

In Wetzlar (as the beginning of *Werther* shows) the Greeks constitute his sole study. He busies himself with Socrates, whom he thinks of portraying as "a great man he would gladly press to his heart out of the enthusiasm of love." Of him he reads in Plato and Xenophon: "If I were Alcibiades for just one day and one night, I would gladly die." (Strange that Søren Kierkegaard,<sup>7</sup> seventy years later, felt that he was likewise related to Alcibiades). Here is something which comes from Hamann via Herder: the study of Socrates.

The zealous and studious youth feels drawn to Theocritus, to Anacreon, to Pindar; he translates and imitates the difficult but clever poets. While reading Pindar he becomes conscious of the fullness of his own being.

He writes to Herder: "The good spirit has at last allowed me to discover the reason for my woodpecker-like nature. It was made plain to me on reading Pindar's ἐπιχρατεῖν δύνασθαι (able to

<sup>7</sup> It is easy—and not easy—to see why Kierkegaard felt related in spirit to Alcibiades. The Athenian general's self-will and unbridled insolence could hardly be said to have been duplicated in the Danish defender of the Christian religion. Nor was Kierkegaard ever accused of profanation. Quite the contrary. But his troubles with the spiritual authorities, his belief in his mission to set his people right, his unquestioned talents, his capriciousness and the bitterness of his declining years resemble to a marked degree those of his alleged affinity in the days of Socrates.

overcome)." He feels like one of the victors in the Olympic games of whom Pindar sings: "When you boldly stand in your chariot and four young horses plunge along wildly and disorderly in your reins, you direct their strength, pull in the horse that runs too far out, whip down the one that rears, chase, lead, and turn them, strike them with the whip, hold them back, urge them on, until at last all sixteen feet bear you along, keeping perfect step, to your goal—that is mastership, ἐπικρατεῖν, virtuosanship."

He begins to feel that he is lord of his fiery and powerful talents. Up to the present he had merely sauntered around and looked about; he had never taken definite hold. To take hold, to grip fast (*drein greifen, packen*) becomes for him at present the essential characteristic of all immortal excellence. Herder had told him that with him sight, seeing is everything. Wolfgang understands that now; he will get a firm hold of things; he will grasp them aright. Sight and view mean in reality the relinquishing of claim to; they signify the standing off at a distance; tangibility on the other hand is truth: "Of what avail are a thousand eyes without the feeling hand?"

Despite the visionary bombast of expression, we do note from now on a more passionate inclination toward the palpable in art; toward the plastic. Goethe's being becomes more and more replete with a careful sensing; with a sensuous imagination.

He translates Pindar's fifth Olympic ode; and we detect traces of this occupation, of these studies, of these confessions of artistic faith, in *Wanderers Sturmlied* from the same period, that wild, spiritual

song sung while wandering in the rain and storm.  
It closes as follows:

Wenn die Räder rasselten Rad an Rad  
Rasch um's Ziel weg,  
Hoch flog siegdurchglühter Jünglinge Peitschenknall,  
Und sich Staub wälzt,  
Wie vom Gebirg, herab sich  
Kieselwetter ins Thal wälzt,  
Glühte deine Seel' Gefahren, Pindar!  
Muth, Pindar!—glühte—

## IV

Herder also taught Goethe to understand the spirit of Hebraic poetry. It was, to be sure, neither historic lore nor philosophic wisdom which Herder proclaimed; he was as rich in error as in poetic receptivity. He naïvely derived the myth of creation from Egypt and had no doubt at all but that it was older than the legendary Moses whom he regarded as a historical figure. Goethe reveals the influence of Herder in his essay entitled *Zwo biblische Fragen*, his juvenile attempt at Hebraic archæology, and to no less degree when he undertakes to translate the *Song of Solomon* into separate songs. A few years later, Herder himself published the *Song of Solomon* under the rubric *Lieder der Liebe*. It was in accordance with Herder's idea that Goethe divided the venerable poem into different sections, each consisting of independent parts.

In one of these sections, the young girl, awakened at night by a dream, begins a fruitless search for her lover. She wanders about near her house, out

on the streets of the city, through the market places and squares, but all in vain:

Mich trafen die umgehenden Wächter der Stadt,  
 Schlugen mich, verwundeten mich,  
 Nahmen mir den Schleier,  
 Die Wächter der Mauern.

Sulamith replies to the chorus of women:

Ich beschwöre euch, Töchter Jerusalems.  
 Findet ihr meinen Freund,  
 Wollt ihr ihm sagen,  
 Dass ich vor Liebe krank bin.

They ask:

Was ist dein Freund vor andern Freunden,  
 Du schönste der Weiber?  
 Was ist dein Freund vor andern Freunden,  
 Dass du uns so beschwörest?

She says:

Mein Freund ist weiss und rot,  
 Auserkoren unter viel Tausenden.  
 Sein Haupt ist das reinste Gold,  
 Seine Haarlocken scharzw wie ein Rabe.

It was from this that Goethe derived the motif of the beginning of the fifth act of *Egmont*, on which he began to work soon thereafter. Clärchen, who has let the titular hero in so frequently at night, seeks him now in vain. She rushes through the streets, and the citizens endeavor to persuade her to go home by calling her attention to the fact that Alba's patrol will soon appear. She implores these same citizens to protect Egmont.

*Zimmermeister:* What's the matter with you, girl!

*Klärchen:* Can't you understand me? I mean the Count!  
 I mean Egmont!

*Jetter*: Don't mention his name! It is fatal.

*Klärchen*: Don't mention his name? How? Don't mention his name? Who doesn't mention his name on every occasion? Where hasn't his name been written? I have often read his name with all of its letters in these stars . . . Whenever people said: 'There comes Egmont! He is coming from Ghent!'—the inhabitants of the streets through which he had to pass considered themselves fortunate. And when you heard the sound of his horse's hoofs, everyone of you laid down his work and over the worried faces which appeared at the window there came a ray of joy and hope as if from the sun itself. Then you took your children in your arms, as you stood in the doorway, and explained to them that that was Egmont, the greatest of men, that it was he. . . .

This is the motif, transformed and developed, from the *Song of Solomon*: "My friend is chosen from out among ten thousand."

The many divergent examples from various spiritual fields show what aims and ideas the first meeting and association with Herder evoked in young Wolfgang's mind. The relation to Herder is indeed the first outstanding example of a beneficent encroachment, so to speak, of an advantageous impregnation. Anything that was foreign to Goethe's deeper nature, and that had been taken up in a purely imitative fashion, Teutomania for example, was at once and for all time discarded. Anything that narrowed Goethe's mind, such as his aversion to columns or his dislike of the antique on modern soil, was immediately put aside. Anything, on the other hand, that was over-defiant of rules, too fanciful, the trend toward Shakespeare, for example, was, despite all the admiration for it and recognition of it, completely and vigorously renounced when Goethe cast his lot with the spirit of the Greeks

as that was conceived at the close of the eighteenth century. And even more so when he returned to French classicism and, contrary to Schiller's wishes, once more championed Voltaire, that particular writer of tragedies who was held in so slight esteem by Lessing, and indeed later by Goethe himself.

But, however much Goethe may have swung from one spiritual tendency to another, the breath of genuine inspiration that he received from Herder remained with him forever. He was exceptionally fortunate to know in his early youth a mind that was so much more completely developed than his own and so much more comprehensive. This is indeed an experience which everyone who hopes to accomplish something unforgettable in the domain of art must undergo. Even the genius needs a mentor; and no one needs to a greater degree than a genius that particular sort of emancipation which fructifies.

## CHAPTER V

### FRIEDERIKE BRION—THE LYRICS OF YOUTH

FOR the development of Goethe during his stay in Strassburg, his acquaintance with Friederike Brion was of hardly less significance than his association with Herder. She was a very young girl, the daughter of a preacher then stationed at a small village not far from Strassburg.

Friederike stands out in Goethe's life with the glory of springtime; the memories of her love encircle her head with ravishing charm. The poems addressed to her give irrefutable proof of her influence. They are quite superior to anything the young poet had previously written. Just what she was, and what the relation between her and her youthful admirer was, we know only from the sketch in the tenth and eleventh books of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. This is known to all men as a famous portrayal; and it seems to adhere rigidly to reality, though it does not necessarily have to be entirely true to life. In the very title Goethe has warned us that he has reserved to himself the privilege of remodelling in poet's fashion; and the author, then more than sixty years old, no longer had, it would seem, an entirely clear picture of this tragic idyl of his early life. At any rate, when comment on the causes of the dissolution between the two seemed desirable, the elder Goethe took advantage of the

intervening time and insisted that certain incidents, the very ones we would expect him to recall quite easily, were now effaced from his memory. There is, for example, that last meeting between the two, distressing for both, but more so for the deserted than the deserter. Goethe expresses himself as follows: "In this affliction and confusion I simply had to see Friederike once more. Those were painful days *concerning which I no longer have a distinct recollection.*"

Accompanied by a friend who knew the parson's family in Sesenheim, Goethe rode, he tells us, out to the rustic parsonage, in order to make the acquaintance of the family of which he had heard so many kind things and which had been compared by acquaintances of his to the vicar's family in Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Goethe and his friend had just been made familiar with Goldsmith's story through Herder, who had translated it and read it to them. Goethe disguised himself by dishevelling his hair and donning the thread-bare garb of a mendicant theological student.

There is no doubt but that our hero cherished from his very childhood a fondness for playing comedy, for mystifying, for appearing incognito, for wearing some sort of disguise. This coincides with his love for the theatre and the illusion connected therewith. It was not in accord with the best of taste, however, for Goethe to indulge in this hobby just here where he was to be introduced into a perfectly strange and quite hospitable family. The buffoonery took vengeance on him, to be sure, when he felt out of place because of his unattractive external appearance, though he was repaid for his

attempt when he later appeared as an elegantly dressed young man of the world and made a quite pronounced and favorable impression. The importance attached to all the uncomfortableness and confusion which arose from this first disguise—which was almost immediately followed by a second—is a trifle disconcerting. Hardly less disturbing to the reader, who wishes a straightforward, logical account of the events and persons, is the persistency with which the parallel is maintained and elaborated between this country home and that of *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

However keen Goethe's power of observation may have been, he always had a tendency to see that which he had read mirrored in that which he experienced. On this account his own Werther, who at the very beginning of the story begs his friend to remain forever silent about the books, cannot so much as see the girls drawing water from the well without being reminded of the age of Homer when the daughters of the king attended to this task; and Werther's own Charlotte cannot stand by the window and watch the rain fall during the thunder-storm without repeating the word: *Klopstock!*

The portrayal of Friederike is balmy and beautiful, charmingly shaded and finely executed. When she finally appears in the doorway, after they had waited for her for quite a while, "there arose in truth a star in that rural sky." And a star arose in Goethe's own life at the same moment. In French Alsace, where the town girls dressed in French fashion, Friederike dressed "German," that is to say, partly like a country lass and partly like a city girl. She wore a white bodice with a short white

skirt reaching to her ankles so that her dainty feet were plainly visible. Her apron was of black taffeta. Slender and nimble as if she bore no weight at all, she stood there before him, her heavy braids of blond hair hanging down her back and seeming almost too heavy for her fine neck. She looked dauntingly about with her clear blue eyes while her fine little nose pointed in space as though there weren't a single care in the whole wide world. Her straw hat hung on her arm—she was an open-air being.

In his portrayal of her Goethe remarks that there are some women who look best in the drawing room, while others appear to better advantage out of doors. Friederike belonged to the latter class. The charm of her bearing seemed to vie with the flower-decked earth; her cheerful, vivacious face seemed in perfect harmony with the blue sky above. She had a beneficent effect upon all who came into her presence.

She was never more beautiful than when she moved about quickly on an elevated path where she came into full view. She was most beautiful when she ran. Just as the roe seems to fulfil its real purpose in life when it gaily scampers across the sprouting grass, just so did she seem to reveal her real character most distinctly when she fleetly ran down across the meadow near to the edge in order to fetch something she had forgotten, or to look for something she had lost, or to call to a couple that had dropped behind.

The great master has succeeded, as an old man, in conjuring up a character that is like spring, like the flowers of the field, like a folk melody. And this character is rich in traits that seem to exclude

each other: there is reserve and there is vivacity, naïveté and self-consciousness, mirth and calm deliberation. This character seems like a blending into one of the atmosphere of a clear day, of a balmy evening, and of a warm summer night. With inimitable finesse, we are shown how this character, which needs a background of flowering fields and running brooks, which is at home among shrubs and foliage stirred by the wind, loses some of its attraction in Strassburg when surrounded by tapestryed walls and mirrors and clocks and porcelain figures. And yet, Friederike, despite her country dress, which stands out in conspicuous contrast to the fashionable costumes of the city, is quite equal to the occasion, and moves about with unimpeachable grace.

There is a great deal more inner tenderness in Goethe's delineation of Friederike than in that of any of his former women friends.

The affair with Gretchen ends, as all the world knows, with a discordant note. When, in the Frankfort lawsuit, her name was found at the close of the love letter that Wolfgang had sketched as a joke, she said,—and that in a legal cross-examination: "I cannot deny that I saw him frequently and with pleasure. But I always looked upon him as a child; my affection for him was that of a sister. I have given him some good advice." The clever, fifteen-year-old boy was annoyed by this statement. The familiarities which she, his senior by nearly three years, was accustomed to allow herself in his presence became in time intolerable to Goethe. For, he contended, her naturally sulky and peevish disposition never made it possible for him to enjoy the same or similar privileges.

The affair with Käthchen Schönkopf also had its disagreeable features. If not in anything else, at least in the garrulity with which everything was repeated to the drill-master Behrisch. In a letter to Behrisch, dated November 7, 1767, we read:

The hand that now touches the paper in order to write to you, this lucky hand she pressed to her bosom. Oh Behrisch! There is poison in these kisses! Why must they be so sweet? You see, I am indebted to you for this eternal bliss. It was your advice; it was your suggestion. Such an hour! What are a thousand dull, worm-eaten, care-worn, murky, fretful evenings in comparison with this one hour! And this hour I owe to you; and I know of no one to whom I would rather owe it than to you. God bless you! I often pray for you when I am in Heaven, and I am there when she holds me in her arms.

When he later praises Käthchen as his sweetheart, he initiates the reader into his great good fortune through the medium of charming verses:

Ich, der ich diese Kunst verstehe,  
Ich habe mir ein Kind erwählt,  
Dass uns zum Glück der schönsten Ehe  
Allein des Priesters Segen fehlt.

In his relation with Friederike there is, on the contrary, not the slightest touch of anything disagreeable; there is no uppishness, no arrogance; there is not the least bit of puppyism; there is no mere physical desire; there is a feeling as of a deep respiration which enriches the life of the soul, a feeling strong and deep, though not necessarily lasting. With some people, the permanence of an emotion depends by no means upon its depth.

The infatuated young student never has the least grievance against the adored of his heart. A certain

reserve on his own part was quickly overcome. As we know, the daughter of the French dancing master had pronounced a curse on the first woman who should kiss him after she had been so favored. The validity of the superstition was of short duration. Goethe is content, in 1813, with the following impersonal, philosophic comment:

Such a youthful affection, cherished at haphazard, may be compared to a bomb thrown up into the sky at night-time. It rises rather evenly, reaches the stars, mingles with them, seems to dwell for a while among them, and then it suddenly shoots down over the same course by which it rose, and spreads destruction at the end of its journey.

But Goethe could not explain his flight from Friederike by logic; nor could he condone it by philosophy. In a series of faithless heroes—Adelbert, Clavigo, Fernando, Faust—he punished himself for his inconstancy. And yet just as he had written concerning the rock-spring, and concerning himself in *Mahomet's Gesang*, he is not to be detained by any flower that entwines itself about his knee.

## II

Such was the Sensenheim episode in retrospect; its immediate effect had been to open his lips to unforgettable song. We hear at once the new tone, the Goethe tone as one comes to know it, which breaks forth, the tone that is like the ring of the sword Skraep: it can be distinguished from among a hundred:

Erwache, Friederike,  
Vertreib die Nacht,  
Die einer deiner Blicke  
Zum Tage macht.

Der Vögel sanft Geflüster  
Ruft liebevoll,  
Dass mein geliebt Geschwister  
Erwachen soll.

These are to be sure simple words, the introductory stanza to a serenade, a morning song. Nor does the rhythm seem at all remarkable; it is exceedingly plain, and yet there is in it the full sounding, ringing arsis of a wonderful overture. There is an inner richness, a fullness of melody in the sound just as there is fullness in a strong, flavored wine, or fullness in the song of the nightingale.

Enter in, for here is Spring! Spring itself! Here is a picture like that of the wooded soil in the days when the anemones begin to bloom; like that of the forest when it buds anew; a scented air like that of the first warm days of the year; a welling forth of bubbling springs, the unimpeded flow of silver brooks. These verses, in themselves mere words, have the feel of the fresh silk of early foliage, or the smoothness of sweet-scented blades of grass.

The full significance of the word Spring, of the word Youth in the case of a poet who was then twenty-one years of age and whose mother was eighteen years old at his birth, the full connotation of the word Genius, a genius whose poetic fount was soon to gush forth and spread out like a mighty stream, whose poetic foliage was soon to cast its shadow over generations—all of this fills the reader's soul and leaps to his lips when he reads these poems.

Without a shadow of ostentation, Wolfgang gives expression to his melancholy upon separation from

Friederike whose figure hovers before him without ceasing:

Ein grauer, trüber Morgen  
 Bedeckt mein liebes Feld,  
 Im Nebel tief verborgen  
 Liegt um mich her die Welt.  
 O, liebliche Friederike,  
 Dürft ich nach dir zurück,  
 In *einem* deiner Blicke  
 Liegt Sonnenschein und Glück.

Der Baum, in dessen Rinde  
 Mein Nam' bei deinem steht,  
 Wird bleich vom rauhen Winde,  
 Der jede Lust verweht.  
 Der Wiesen grüner Schimmer  
 Wird trüb wie mein Gesicht,  
 Sie sehen die Sonne nimmer,  
 Und ich Friederiken nicht.

Concerning this tree, in which he had carved his name beneath that of Friederike, he writes on a tablet in the beech summer house that stood in the parson's garden the following verses. They contain the fire of youth, the reverence of love, and for the first time unqualified mastery from the point of view of stylistic terseness:

Dem Himmel wachs' entgegen  
 Der Baum, der Erde Stolz!  
 Ihr Wetter, Sturm, und Regen,  
 Verschont das heil'ge Holz!  
 Und soll ein Nam' verderben,  
 So nehmt die obern in Acht!  
 Es mag der Dichter sterben,  
 Der diesen Reim gemacht.

To be sure these poems do not contain the same amount of delightful melody, inexpressibly con-

densed and mysterious, which we find in the poems written in Weimar about ten years later when Goethe was living under the mild sceptre of Frau von Stein. Think of such a little poem as *Aus dem Zauberthal dort nieden*, not to mention *Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh!* And yet, the Sesenheim poems are charming because of their simplicity and freshness.

And what a wonderfully descriptive and musical poem that is in which Goethe describes a journey to Sesenheim in burning expectation of seeing his sweetheart again! Goethe had revised it twice before it appeared in 1775. He subdued and smoothed out the passionateness and gave the style a more rhetorical swing. But the fourth stanza alone has been improved thereby. The first two stanzas sound far more genuine and their impression is far more vivid in the first version, which transports by reason of its artistic fullness and truth:

Es schlug mein Herz, geschwind zu Pferde!  
Und fort! wild, wie ein Held zur Schlacht!  
Der Abend wiegte schon die Erde,  
Und an den Bergen hing die Nacht.  
Schon stand im Nebelkleid die Eiche  
Wie ein gethürmter Riese da,  
Wo Finsternis aus dem Gesträuche  
Mit hundert schwarzen Augen sah.

Der Mond von einem Wolkenhügel  
Schien schläfrig aus dem Duft hervor.  
Die Winde schwangen leise Flügel,  
Umsausten schauerlich mein Ohr.  
Die Nacht schuf tausend Ungeheuer—  
Doch tausendfacher war mein Muth.  
In meinen Adern welches Feuer!  
In meinem Herzen welche Gluth!

In every visit to Sesenheim, whether brief or prolonged, the joy of meeting was ever tinged with sorrow at the prospect of eventual separation. And how the shadow deepened, as this prospect of a final leave-taking became a certainty! And yet how jubilant the young student was at heart so soon as the conviction grew that he not only loved but was loved in turn:

Der Abschied, wie bedrängt, wie trübe!  
Aus deinen Blicken sprach dein Herz.  
In deinen Küssen welche Liebe!  
In deinen Augen welcher Schmerz!  
Du gingst, ich stand, und sah zur Erden,  
Und sah dir nach mit nassem Blick,  
Und doch, welch Glück, geliebt zu werden!  
Und lieben, Götter, welch ein Glück!

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LICENTIATE—THE PRACTICE OF LAW— JOURNALISM—THE SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION

THE father had desired that Wolfgang should take his doctorate in law at Strassburg; he became only a licentiate. When his doctoral dissertation was rejected, he contented himself with offering a number of Latin theses which he wished to defend. That his proffered monograph was refused was due to the simple fact that he had attacked orthodoxy. Concerning the dissertation itself, we know only what is contained in a letter written on August 7, 1771, by a medical student:

There is a student here by the name of Goethe from Frankfort-am-Main who, it is said, has studied quite diligently at Göttingen and Leipzig. This young man, who is quite puffed up over his store of knowledge, but chiefly by reason of a few undesirable traits he has got from M. Voltaire, wanted to present a thesis with the title: *Jesus autor et judex sacrorum*. In this thesis he contended, among other things, that Jesus Christ was not the author of our religion, but that a number of other wise men composed it in his name. The Christian religion, he avers, is merely a rational, political institution, etc. But the right people had the good grace to forbid the publication of his masterpiece. Thereupon he presented, in order to give palpable vent to his contempt, the simplest kinds of theses. One was: *The natural law is what nature has taught all creatures*. The authorities laughed at him and his case, and with that the affair was ended.

It is entirely correct that the title of Goethe's first thesis read: *Jus naturae est quod natura omnia animalia docuit*. He presented indeed no fewer than fifty-six theses with the juridical and political postulates, one after another, with no thought of logical arrangement.

Some of them are quite conservative, Nos. 43 and 44 for example: *It is the duty of the Prince to make all laws: it is also his duty to interpret them*. Or take No. 53: *The death penalty should not be done away with*. Some of them are quite liberal and cautiously expressed, as No. 54: *Should the woman who kills her newly born child suffer the death penalty? There is no unity among the learned on this point*.

He had now, like Faust, the title of *Magister* and was called *Doctor* out of courtesy. *Heisse Magister, heisse Doctor gar*. But deep down in his soul jurisprudence had but little attraction for him. He cast about with big literary tasks; he wanted to write a *Cæsar*, a *Götz von Berlichingen*, a *Faust*.

He never got very far with his *Cæsar*. All that he really wrote was a few speeches soon to appear as paralipomena at the close of his *Epimenides*, and then separately. At this time he evidently felt entirely at one with *Cæsar*, though a little later in his contribution to Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*, where he really interpreted the pictures rather than the people, he speaks with the utmost warmth of Brutus and disparagingly of the one reproduction of *Cæsar*. He finds therein a selfishness hard as iron and more than tyrannical. But of the other contour he writes: "How great, pure,

and good! Mighty and powerful without defiance. Immovable and irresistible. Wise, effective, lifted up above all things, feeling himself fortune's son, considerate, expeditious—the incarnation of all human greatness." Nor was he as an older man kindly disposed to Cæsar's murderers. Concerning them he writes in verse: "They begrudged Cæsar his empire without knowing how to govern it themselves." We will later see what prevented him from elaborating this theme.

It is plain that Goethe was thinking of Herder and himself when he has Sulla say of Cæsar: It is distinctly uncomfortable when such a whelp grows up by the side of you. You can see by his very limbs that he will in time completely outgrow you.

Two excellent speeches are put in Cæsar's mouth. The first: "You know that I soon grow tired of everything, but most quickly of praise and indulgence. Yes, Servius, in order to become and remain a real man, I hope that I may have, so long as I live, great antagonists and honored enemies." The second: "So long as I live the base shall tremble, and they will not have a sufficient amount of courage left to rejoice at my grave."

Strangely enough, Napoleon asked Goethe in 1808 to write a *Cæsar* that would be superior to Voltaire's *Death of Cæsar*. Little did he realize that the poet himself had been interested in this very theme almost forty years before.

## II

In August 1771, Goethe left Strassburg, and on his way to Frankfort sojourned for a short while

in Mannheim where, for the first time in his life, he saw casts of Roman sculpture. For him, as for Winckelmann and Lessing, they represented the very apex of Greek art. He saw *Laokoon*, *The Apollo of Belvedere*, and *The Venus of Medici*. These, as well as various antique busts, made a profound impression upon him. It was from these casts that his conception of Hellenic sculpture was first acquired, long before he went to Italy. That there was a significant difference between Roman art and Greek art he neither felt nor knew.

Immediately upon his arrival in Frankfort he submitted his application to practice law, that is to say, to become counsel for the defense in private cases. His petition was granted and he appeared before the bar in several cases, in which the pleas have been preserved. We see how ardently he takes his client's case to heart, how youthful and pugnacious is the tone he adopts, and how every defense in his hands takes on the form of an indictment. He uses the strongest, frequently the very gruffest expressions. Clever he really is not; but he expresses himself in such picturesque comparisons, in such striking phrases, that one feels that back of the lawyer stands the poet. For example, he declares: "The cloak of untruth has been thoroughly perforated," or, "The raven abuses the jack-daw for being black," or, "If the highly praised building lot turns out to be only a body of water frozen over, the building which is erected on it will sink into its grave at the first wind of spring—a piece of genuine good fortune for the builder that he had not erected unto himself on this spot any columns of glory."

Goethe's first opponent was likewise not sparing in his use of words of gruff censure. The tribunal rebuked him as well as Wolfgang for transgressing the limits of dignity. Goethe accepted the reproof in good part and his tone became more moderate in the following suits. Yet we can see that he is vexed at the pedantry of professional men. Even in *Werther* the hero complains bitterly of the pedantry of his superior officer, the Ambassador, who is constantly correcting his language: "One always finds a better word, a cleaner particle." Goethe was thinking here partly of himself and partly of his model, young Jerusalem and the latter's disagreement with the Brunswick Ambassador.

### III

In a letter from this same Jerusalem we read a number of things that are not exactly complimentary to Goethe: "During my day he was a ladies' man in Leipzig; now he has become also a newspaper scribbler in Frankfort."

On his arrival in Frankfort Goethe fell in with a circle of lively young men who, like himself, stood under Herder's leadership and who had decided to take over the redaction of an old paper called the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen*, in order to make propaganda for their views and to start a vigorous protest against everything in German literature which they regarded as puffed up, harmful, hypocritical, flat, and stupid. There were the two brothers Schlosser, one of whom was soon to become Goethe's brother-in-law by marrying his sister Cornelia. Schlosser incidentally made her exceed-

ingly unhappy—through no desire on his own part. There was Höpfner, professor of law at Giessen, to whom Goethe introduced himself under the guise of an unknown student of law, thus repeating his conduct in Sesenheim, and there was Johann Heinrich Merck who, next to Herder, exercised the greatest influence on the development of Goethe's talents during these first years and whom Goethe has immortalized as the sharp critic of his life and works. It was Merck whom he selected as the model of the biting, witty, cynical characters in his early productions, Mephisto in *Faust* and Carlos in *Clavigo*.

It must be said just here that Merck, as a conversationalist, employed expressions that were undoubtedly much more fresh and bold than those which we find in his writings; from his many published letters no one would ever suspect that he had pedagogical ability coupled with uncompromising wit.

Merck was an extremely versatile individual who wasted his talents in dilettantism. He was born at Darmstadt in 1741 and was accordingly eight years older than Goethe and vastly superior to him in practical experience and worldly wisdom. He had decided ability both as a merchant and as an author. He won the applause of such contemporaries as Herder, Wieland, Karl August, and the Duchess of Weimar. Admitted to the very best circles, he was at once regarded and treated as a friend and brother. His knowledge was sound; in English literature he was perfectly at home; he had translated not a little from English. French was to him a second mother-tongue. His young wife, whom he passionately loved from the very first, was a

French woman from Switzerland. To her he never spoke or wrote anything but French. He was moreover an excellent calculator and a prompt, firm, business man, though fortune at last deserted him completely.

More remarkable than his knowledge was his critical ability, sharp and yet reliable as it invariably was. Wieland said of him jestingly: "Haziness does not protect against, illusions do not exist in the presence of, his damnable perspicacity." As a critic of art he was stern and fearless though he won the good will of all by his fine feeling and charming modesty. This is also Dalberg's judgment. Wieland says somewhere concerning him, that it could never occur to a healthy human being to appeal to a higher tribunal than Merck (unless Merck happened to be so out of humor that his criticism reflected disgust and rancor). So far as Goethe is concerned, he was decidedly dependent upon Merck's opinion. He never forgot Merck's critical estimates of his works. Years later in his autobiography he records how it was Merck who first gave him the courage to publish *Götz*, and how his first expression concerning *Werther*, "well, that is rather pretty," brought the young author to despair, whereupon amends for the first opinion were made by a second, and how finally Merck, after having read *Clavigo*, reminded Goethe of his great aim by saying: "Such muck (*quark*) you must never write in the future; others can do that." Merck saw through the friends Wolfgang made in his naïveté, only to be quickly disappointed, such friends as Leuchsenring and the brothers Stolberg. Merck predicted Goethe's break with the latter and in-

spired him to write *Pater Brey* against the first. He defined in these words Goethe's own poetic nature before starting on his first journey to Switzerland: "You try to give to the real a poetic form; others try to make the so-called poetic real, and the result is stupid trash." During his first visit to Weimar he broke out once: "What the deuce can persuade Wolfgang to stay here in Weimar bending and bowing and scraping around the Court, bepraising others or, what amounts to the same thing with me, having himself praised by them. Can't he find anything better to do?"

Such was the nature of the man who was the soul of the new critical venture, which for a short time was read by everybody in Germany who had intellectual interests. Lively correspondence and frequent meetings brought the collaborators together. They met not simply with common interests, common ideals, common aims; they also discussed together the scientific and poetic phenomena of the day. They were in complete harmony as to what sort of judgment should be passed upon them. Wolfgang kept the minutes of these meetings.

The articles were anonymous, a fact which later made it quite difficult to ascribe to the various collaborators precisely what belonged to them. But the articles were the product of more than one clever mind, even though only one hand wielded the pen, so that identification of each author is doubly difficult. This circumstance explains why the elder Goethe included in his *Sämmtliche Schriften* one or two articles which he in truth did not write, just as he excluded one or two that he did write. Even Wilhelm Scherer believed in his day that he de-

tected the pen of Goethe in a number of places where it can hardly be shown. The great Weimar edition of Goethe's works was the first to draw the line. It published, in small type, a number of articles which were, to be sure, written in the spirit of Goethe though it is quite safe to assume that he did not write them. There is, for example, the excellent little review of Dr. Münter's book on the conversion of Struensee, which Goethe thought he had written, and which in truth is so much like him. It is shown that in this book both the converted and the converter were insignificant, jejune human beings. And there is another Danish book which is mentioned in translation, Johannes Ewald's *Rolf Krage*.<sup>8</sup> Concerning it we have the laconic, pithy, and lucid, though not wholly warranted criticism expressed in these words:

Night, high treason, fratricide, incest and death, darkness, gruesomeness, the pain of love and the pain of death, so that we contemplate our journey home with a reverent, God preserve us!

Among these reviews there are several that deserve the closest attention of posterity, despite the fact that the books discussed have long since been hopelessly forgotten. There is, first of all, the critique of J. v. Sonnenfel's *Ueber Vaterlandsliebe*. It shows how great the spiritual independence of the young genius was, despite his susceptibility to Herder's teachings. We have seen Goethe captivated by all that is German at the expense of the

<sup>8</sup> Johannes Ewald (1743-1781) published his *Rolf Krage* in 1770. It is the first national tragedy of Danish literature. The work was based on Saxo's chronicles and is reminiscent of Klopstock. Rolf and Hother resemble the heroes of Kotzebue and Iffland as much as they do those of the old Danish sagas.

—TRANSLATOR.

Romance nations; but this visionary enthusiasm did not go so far that he, either in his youth or in his mature years, forgot how much Germany lacked from the point of view of a unified whole, of a real fatherland. Saturated as he is with the spirit of eighteenth century cosmopolitanism, he does not feel the loss of any such real fatherland; nor does he regard it as something good. On the contrary, he derisively casts aside the then perpetual cries: "We have no fatherland; we have no patriotism." He says:

When we find a place in the world where we can rest with our belongings, a field that provides us with sustenance, a house in which to live, haven't we a fatherland? And do not thousands upon thousands have that in every state? And do they not live happy within this limit? Why all this fruitless striving after a feeling that we neither can have nor wish to have, which only in the case of certain peoples and at certain times has been and is the result of many happily coinciding circumstances? Roman patriotism? God preserve us from it as we would pray to be preserved from some huge giant! We would find no chair to sit on, no bed to lie in.

One is constrained to compare this outbreak with the declaration by Goethe in 1806, when he experienced the formation of the Rhine Confederation without the slightest bit of excitement. He had heard it said that a fatherland as a whole had been lost on that occasion. But he replied by saying that no one had seen such a "whole," and that complaint about the loss of it seemed to him like affection. He felt in 1806 just as he felt in 1772. It was not until 1814, in *Epimenides*, that his heart beat in unison with the Germany which had cast off foreign dominion.

Another diverting and significant review is the one that tells of Goethe's first encounter with one of the Jacobi brothers. Professor Geheimrat Klotz, the antagonist whom Lessing had disarmed and ridiculed, had died in December 1771. A certain Hausen had, not long after Klotz's death, published his biography. It completely unveiled the mixture of skill and vulgarity with which Klotz, as editor of the magazine *Deutsche Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften*, had worked, with shameless self-advertisement, for insignificant confederates and with uncompromising insolence toward prominent men. One of Klotz's friends, all of whom now tried to get as far away from him as possible, was the delicate young lyric writer, Johann Georg Jacobi, who, in the form of a letter to a woman acquaintance, had had a defense published which amounted to a whining, pitiful self-glorification. He had promised the world to be good and noble; and good and noble he wished to continue to be. In anonymous letters someone doubted his love of virtue and his hostility to sin, but to doubt his character was impossible, however much this might be attempted by envy and calumny.

Goethe had reviewed Jacobi's self-defense along with Hausen's biography. This was done boldly and directly:

Herr Jacobi and his good heart; the good heart and Herr Jacobi; a large part of the public is heartily sick of both. Couldn't he be an amiable poet without wishing to have himself loved everywhere and by everybody? Couldn't he be an honest man without all of these anxious protestations? . . . The content and nature of his declamation is most repellent to us. . . Would that Herr Jacobi might continue to be "the noble, warm friend of man, the wise and true

friend of virtue, and the stern enemy of sin" and leave the rest of us in peace with his virtues!

That is a highly significant introduction to the relation between Goethe and the two Jacobi brothers, both of whom were from the very first most repellent to him, though one of them became his close friend, then felt deeply wounded by his mocking criticism, and finally dedicated his *Woldemar* to him, a book which Goethe in the haughtiness of youth had rightly scorned. The Jacobi brothers occupy a very modest place in Goethe's life, though he occupies a very important place in theirs, indeed, even a definitive one in the case of Friedrich Heinrich, whose youth was essentially determined and moulded by Goethe's. But his relation to Goethe, despite all his personal friendliness, was merely one of sharp contrasts—in so far as it is possible to contrast a very great man with one who is, after all, so insignificant and profoundly tiresome.

The third review deserving emphasis is that of *Gedichte von einem Polnischen Juden*, though not because of the poems themselves: they are at present utterly unknown. The very title appealed to the young reviewer, for it seemed to promise something quite out of the ordinary—a high mettled soul, a mind that goes deep, developed as it has been under an alien and inhospitable sky. The preface contained, however, mere vapid self-complacency; and in the verses themselves there was a deal of verdant commonplace which smacked neither of Judaism nor of Poland. The reviewer then straightway forgets his pitiable dilettant to whom he was supposed to draw attention, and gives instead a picture

of what is going on in his own mind. And with a challenge to Germany's genius—expressed unfortunately in a diffuse and rickety style—he presents us with a thought-provoking delineation of his own character and his own expectations:

Let, O Genius of our Fatherland, a youth come forth at once in all his glory, a youth who, full of the force and buoyancy and mirth of younger years, will be the best fellow of his circle . . . who will sing the most joyful song . . . to whom the prettiest girl at the ball will gladly give her hand— . . . whom the beautiful, clever, cheerful young woman will try to catch by using all her charms . . . but whose heart will proudly tear itself loose so soon as he sees that his goddess is *only* beautiful, only clever, only cheerful . . . But let it be brought to light then, O Genius, that it was not shallowness that gave rise to his uncertainty, and let him find a girl who is worthy of him! . . . Truth will be found in his poetry and living beauty as well, not soap-bubble ideals such as are blown up in German songs by the hundreds.

#### IV

In his father's house in Frankfort Goethe had a confidante in his sister Cornelia. Distressed and unhappy as she had been under her father's pedantic tyranny, she was rejuvenated by association with her brother and took part in his plans and undertakings. In company with her he arranged the Shakespeare celebration during which he delivered the address of the occasion. He told her of the suggestion he had received for a drama by reading the memoirs of an old knight. It was her impatient and kindly importunity that gave him no peace until he had put on paper the ideas that filled him through-

out his stay in Frankfort and with which he now engaged her interest as well.

*Die Geschichte Gottfriedens von Berlichingen mit der eisernen Hand* is Goethe's first more pretentious work; it is written in his oldest style. The idea of this *Gottfried* goes back to Herder, whose Christian name the hero received, and further on back to the influence of Shakespeare, to which young Wolfgang was subjected through Herder during his Strassburg days. The influence of Herder—himself a disciple of Rousseau—is evident in the very opening scene.

Klopstock had devoted himself to German emotionalism; he had awakened a feeling for the exalted, though he saturated the minds of the people with the poetry of the chapel and other sanctimonious localities. Lessing had attacked the rigidly correct French tragedy by referring to Shakespeare. What he really did was to attack the Frenchmen's adherence to the rules in the name of the Aristotelian rules and to insist that Shakespeare upheld Aristotle as correctly interpreted. Herder had never proclaimed adherence to the rules and, as a student of Rousseau, was never satisfied with Enlightenment, the most basic element in Lessing's spiritual equipment. Where nothing in Lessing's whole make-up went beyond the limits of the eighteenth century, Herder prepared the way for the nineteenth century, thus coming into contact with the choicest minds of the new generation and incidentally leaving a strong impression upon them.

The youth of the day felt an especial need, first of all, of a deeper cultivation of the mind and thereby a more complete emancipation. In the old-

fashioned, ill-governed, distintegrated Germany, youth felt under restraint, over-disciplined, but bedizzened socially to the point of unpleasant consciousness. On its wrists it wore society's manacles and over these lace cuffs. On youth's head there was a peruke and over this swayed and hovered obligatory fidelity and princely autocracy. All-mighty custom and usage bedaubed paint and powder on its face. With silk stockings on his legs, hat under his arm, and useless dress sword at his side, the rococo swain of that time, who knew how to bow and get about, was a finished product.

But his heart was yearning for something more. Enlightenment did not satisfy him. He yearned with tremendous vehemence for a revolution, not in the outer world, where he was fully aware of his omnipotence, but in the inner world where, at least in his own eyes, he was sovereign. Light and clarity no longer had their old appeal. He had a desire to find in some cryptic way the deep inner connection between the law of the natural life and the law of the spiritual life. The more the individual came to see his insignificance in society and the state, the more surely he felt that he was only a number, a taxpayer, a docile subject, just so much the more was he filled and carried away with the thought that he was a part of nature, of the infinitely great, a living spark in the flame of all-life, and as a citizen of the earth related to the spirit of the earth.

The individual had something divine in him; he had genius. This genius craved freedom from dogma in any form whether it pertained to life or art or science or religion. It made no difference, he would have none of this dogma with which the

devotees of Enlightenment had particularly concerned themselves. Everything that mankind had heaped up in the course of centuries in the way of limitations of freedom was the direct and diabolic outcome of arbitrariness and iniquity. It became a question of obeying one's genius, not some external law. Outside of the individual's genius, the divine manifested itself in nature. It became therefore a question of following nature. Worship ever brought nature to the fore.

Genuine poetry, which was the greatest thing in life, was not the beautiful and abstract oratory that had come over from the France of the seventeenth century, but the poetry that was found in sublime folk-poems, such as the Bible, in the folk-songs of all nations, and in the poetry created by individuals who, unhampered by the restraint of rules, had followed their own genius. There was Homer, by way of illustration, and Ossian, and Shakespeare. Shakespeare was great, not at all because he had observed the Aristotelian rules, which the French had misinterpreted, but because he had followed his own endowed nature without regard to rules.

The preacher of these doctrines was Herder. The youth that heard his message broke its manacles, washed its face clean of all powder and paint, and took up into its soul abundant drafts of human life and folk life. It hurled its periwig against the wall and placed the crown of sovereign personality on its head. It discarded, and that with vigor, the blade of gallantry which heretofore had characterized the man of polite society, and waved the sceptre of original genius in its hand. This revolution was

ushered in with storming violence; and as this violence was thought to have found final expression in a poor specimen of a drama by Maximilian Klinger, the name of the epoch arose therefrom: *Sturm und Drang*.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Gottfried von Berlichingen*—NATURALISM OF STYLE—*Götz*

*Die Historie Gottfriedens von Berlichingen mit der eisernen Hand*, the first draught of *Götz*, was written in six weeks, without change of mood or flagging of energy. Goethe had read *Götz von Berlichingen's* autobiography in Strassburg. This collection of war anecdotes was written by the bold robber knight who had had his right hand shot off by a cannon ball during the war of the Bavarian Succession, and had had it replaced by a movable iron hand. The incident occurred in 1504. *Götz* was then twenty-four years old. The blunt, vivacious tone in these notes enraptured Goethe. That iron hand, which could wield the lance as well as the sword, became for the young poet a symbol of chivalric power and straightforward honesty. Its owner became for him the very incarnation of German honor. *Götz* appealed to him as the original personality that obeys his genius in calm defiance of all laws—those laws which are the subtle, juridical expression of injustice. As the Monk says of him, he is “the man whom the Princes fear and to whom the oppressed turn.” He is the virile force in nature every act of which is a struggle for liberty. On this account all natural desires flourish in his presence. This accounts for the *Schwärmerei* of the Monk, Brother Martin, for him. Goethe had

Luther in mind. Luther's outbreak to Götz against the monkish vows is most significant:

Poverty, chastity and obedience, three vows, each one of which seems the most intolerable to nature; how intolerable then are all three of them together! . . . O Sir, what are the hardships of your life when compared with the misery of an order that damns the best impulses in us and by which we live, grow and prosper, and this out of a misunderstood zeal to get nearer to God!

There is a decidedly Protestant strain running throughout *Gottfried von Berlichingen*. The Monk expresses his desire for an active life of deeds and exploits, with danger and booty, for the freeman's life on the broad highway in the place of seclusion in the cell.

Then there is the heartfelt sigh of the Monk for the women of others, revealing in the case of the poet a more mature sensuousness than Luther's, with so little that was distinctly coarse and common. This yearning for the individually beautiful in woman appears in the very large part occupied by the siren Adelheid in the economy of the drama. That it was a strong desire is made obvious by the fact that even the demure Maria fears lest she may be taken by surprise by the passion which Weislingen fails to restrain when in her presence. She is afraid to live for a long time under the same roof with him: One has to be on one's guard against these men when their "paroxysms" come over them; it avails so little to appeal to their reason.

Götz is a nature, not an intelligence. He says in the last act:

They have mutilated me piece by piece: my hand, my liberty, my property, my good name. They have left me

only the poorest part of my being, my head, and what is that without the rest!

Götz does not enjoy outward or personal prosperity; for that he is far too magnanimous. Sickingen says to him:

You always get the worst of it. The magnanimous individual is like the man who fed the fish from the bread of his own table and then, out of carelessness, fell into the pond and was drowned. The fish then ate the benefactor with the same relish that they had formerly eaten his benefactions and became fat and strong therefrom.

Goethe had to re-work his material not a little in order properly to transform the historical character that hovered before him. The historical Götz was fond of fighting; he struck for pleasure's sake, in order to measure his strength with that of others. Such was, for example, the *raison d'être* of his feud with Nuremberg. He evinces the fresh blood-thirstiness of a robber knight. In the first act the trooper says to Elizabeth:

Just as we rode out into the dusk, we saw a shepherd guarding his sheep. Five wolves fell upon the flock and attacked it most effectively. Luck to you, dear comrades! Luck at all hazards, and to us too! We were all much pleased at this good omen. And just then Weislingen came riding up with four servants.

The passage is taken from Götz's autobiography, with this difference: The speech in the autobiography refers to the capture of the Count of Waldeck.

Götz loves blood and booty. He requisitioned 18,000 gulden as a ransom for the Count of Waldeck. In Goethe's drama Elizabeth tells Gottfried's son the story of the tailor from Heilbronn, who was

such an excellent marksman that he took the first prize at Cologne. When the citizens of Cologne refused to pay him what they owed him, Götz took the matter in hand and the Cologne marksmen had to give in. That is the exploit. What is omitted is the fact that Götz and the tailor together took twenty-three times as much as was originally due them. That is the booty.

Goethe embellishes to the highest degree Götz's participation in the Peasants' War. He has Götz assume the leadership simply in order thereby to prevent atrocities and to secure justice. In reality Götz made common cause with the bloodthirsty rebels at first and then left them in the lurch; in actuality he was imprisoned two years for this breach and then set free under a 25,000 gulden bond and with the assurance that he would never leave his Castle Hornberg. In his old age he became inordinately pious. During his last years he was always surrounded by his village priest who, in return for an annual reward, took up his abode with him as private confessor.

There is a great difference between the Götz who dies in the priest's arms and Goethe's Gottfried who dies with these words on his lips:

Poor woman! I am leaving you in a degenerate world. Don't forsake her, Lurse! Lock your hearts more carefully than your doors! The age of dishonesty is coming; dishonesty enjoys freedom. The good-for-nothing will rule with cunning, and the brave man will fall into the net which cowardice has placed in his path . . . O heavenly air, Liberty! Liberty! (He dies).

*Elisabeth:* Only up there, up there with you! The world is a prison.

*Maria:* Noble, noble man! Woe to the century that rejected you!

*Lerse:* Woe to posterity that misjudges you!

Goethe has done everything in his power to work himself into the language and customs of the sixteenth century; he made special investigations in order to be certain of the local color of that time; and he made a special effort to portray the romantically picturesque in the gipsy camp and in the secret tribunal. And yet, it is the favorite ideas of his own time that are glorified.

In the conversation between Gottfried and his little son, the father reveals practical knowledge of the thing at hand; the son reveals the useless book learning which is perfectly familiar with the definition but wholly ignorant of the thing itself, the brand of learning that is ascribed to Wagner in *Faust*:

*Karl:* I know something else.

*Gottfried:* What is it?

*Karl:* Jaxthausen is a village and a castle on the Jaxt and has belonged to the Lords of Berlichingen, personally and by right of inheritance, for the past two hundred years.

*Götz:* Do you know the Lords of Berlichingen?

*Karl:* (Looks at him fixedly).

*Götz:* (To himself.) He knows so much about books that he doesn't know his own father.—To whom does Jaxthausen belong?

*Karl:* Jaxthausen is a village and a castle on the Jaxt.

*Götz:* That isn't what I asked you. Thus do women educate their children, and would to God they alone did it this way! I knew all the paths, roads and ferries before I knew the names of the river, the castle and the village.

Gottfried is the original person, Karl the one spoiled by unreal education. The effeminate boy corresponds neither to the age's nor to young

Goethe's conception of manliness. The aunt's indulgent education is not responsible, but his own lack of naturalness. Gottfried says of him: "A hundred such aunts would not have kept me from riding the horses and sleeping in the stable." In reply to the question as to whether there will be a place for him in the world, his mother says:

No, my dear boy. Weak people do not fit into any place in the world; they would have to be vagabonds. On this account sensible women remain at home and effeminate fellows enter the monastery. When my husband starts on a journey, I am not the least bit afraid. If Karl went away, I would live in perpetual anxiety. He is safer in monastic garb than in that of a soldier.

The hero has at the beginning of the sixteenth century the ideals of peace and happiness of the closing eighteenth century. He is astonished at the blindness of the great men and the princes. In his utterances one notices the young poet's revolutionary temperament—which was soon to disappear. Gottfried says:

I have sympathy with master and subject. Woe, woe to the great man who builds on an excess of his esteem! Men's souls become stronger through oppression. But they see and hear not.

*Georg:* Would to God that all princes were blessed by their subjects as you!

*Gottfried:* If I only had many of them! I would never try to be happier than any single one of them, without making them happier. Now our Lords are a consuming fire which nourishes itself, without being satiated, on the happiness, number, blood and sweat of the subject.

When, at the close of the third act, Georg, Gottfried, and at last all cry out: "Long live Liberty!" Gottfried says:

When they (the great) come to have enough human heart to taste the glory that comes from being a great man; when they get so far that their country, well cultivated and blessed, seems to them a paradise with their stiff, heavy, lonesome gardens [Le Notre's]; when every farmer's round cheeks and glad eyes and large families and peaceful prosperous country are assured, and all dramas and all pictures seem to them cold in comparison—then the neighbor will give his neighbor peace, because he himself is happy; then no one will try to extend his boundaries. . . .

*Georg:* Will we ride horses then too?

*Gottfried:* The most restless head will find enough to do . . . We will rid the forest of wolves and we will fetch our quietly plowing neighbor a roast from the woods and in pay for this we will eat soup with him. . . .

What is that but the cue taken from the exponent of public welfare and world peace? With his noble striving for these ideals Gottfried, who is looked upon as a robber knight, stands out in sharp contrast to the entire legal fabric of that time, which represents baseness brought into some sort of orderly coherence. This explains his exclamation in the fourth act:

You call me a robber! God grant that your posterity may be plundered and plucked to the last feather by honorable civilian rogues, by friendly thieves and privileged criminals!

It is necessary to go to Schiller's *Räuber* to find a repetition of that thought. Gottfried is nature and genius, society is legal oppression and rogues' doings within the law.

## II

The naturalism of the style, its emphasis of the all-too-human, which disregards society, corresponds to the apotheosis of nature. In the later version Goethe toned this down more or less. The wild exaggeration is of a piece with the immaturity.

Elizabeth's disparaging statement concerning anyone who is charitable because it is impossible for him to be otherwise, has already been quoted.

The Bishop has asked Franz whether Weislingen is unhurt:

I said: He is well from the topmost point of his longest hair down to the nail on his little toe. I forgot that I recently had to trim your nails; but I did not tell him that for I did not wish to frighten him with an exception.

And yet the same Franz, who is so blunt and who has carried out an order in the way described, gives Goethe's conception of what makes a man a poet. He replies to Weislingen when the latter has become enraptured by Adelheid: "Beauty has made you a poet!"

I feel then at this moment what makes a poet—a full heart, entirely filled with just one feeling.

An idea as to the freedom of speech can be derived from the fact that in the third act, in a scene which incidentally has been preserved in *Götz*, two Imperial servants, who happen to be in a woods near a swamp, begin their conversation in the following way:

What are you doing? I have begged leave to go to the rear. Since that affair last evening my bowels have been so upset that I have to dismount every minute.

Gottfried's own answer to the foreign Captain is no less blunt. In the poem on the drama to Gotter, in 1772, one feels Goethe's delight in vulgar expressions:

Und bring, da hast du meinen Dank,  
Mich vor die Weiblein ohn' Gestank.  
Musst all' die garstigen Worte lindern.  
Aus Scheisskerl Schurk, aus Arsch mach Hintern?

This is the same style that is later imitated in Schiller's *Räuber*. It speaks reluctantly of centuries, never of decades; it needs milleniums. Franz says, for example, when Adelheid chases him away at break of day:

Shall I leave! O that outweighs all the tortures of Hell simply to be able to enjoy Heaven's blessing for just one short moment. A thousand years are only a half a night. O how I hate day! O if we were only living in original night before the light was born, I would be one of the eternal gods, on your bosom, who in the brooding warmth of love lived in himself, and begot in one point the seeds for a thousand worlds, and would feel the joy of a thousand worlds in just one point.

Thus wrote Goethe when he was twenty-two years old. And even three years later he has Beaumarchais in *Clavigo* use, with regard to the inconstant fiancé of his sister, this cannibal-like outbreak: "My teeth are eager for his flesh and my palate thirsts for his blood." In the oldest edition we are even treated to the following:

O if I only had him beyond the sea! I would catch him, bind him to a post, tear his limbs off piece by piece, roast them right before his very eyes, eat of them and dish them up to you, women!

And even in a scene in *Faust* from the year 1773, entitled *Trüber Tag*, we find in the conversation in prose the convulsive passionateness, the wild outbreak of feeling, the ungoverned fustian, in which people of that day saw something Shakespearean. Exclamations, reiterations, execrations, superlatives! There is the grinding of greedy teeth. Infernal eyes are rolled around in their sockets. Save her, or woe be unto you; the most awful execrations upon you for *thousands* of years!

The style in *Gottfried* is as a whole the style of young Goethe. In just one single place it is formed entirely after Shakespeare's comedy. That is Liebe-traut's speech on chess and his *conceitti* on modesty.

May I also mix you in, my gracious Lady?

*Adelheid*: With modesty.

With the modesty of a schoolboy? It blushes when it raises your fan. With the modesty of the courtier? For his lips your hand is Paradise, your lips are Heaven. The modesty of the bride is on your mouth and dares a downward movement to your bosom, where the modesty of the soldier quickly takes up a position and looks about for a *canapé*.

That is a study in style after the fashion of Rosalind and Beatrice and various Shakespearean clowns,—which did not turn out any too well and is therefore deleted, even in *Götz*, 1773.

### III

Three different elements can be studied in the drama:

There is the historical element which is pre-eminently romantic, melodramatic—the punishment

by the secret tribunal. Then there is the personal element; and finally the part that is the poet's free invention.

The personal element is the most important. Goethe has split himself into two different persons. In accord with his higher being, his yearning at this time, he is Götz, the bold nature hewn from a single block, who lives for justice and dies for freedom. In accord with his lower being, or more correctly according to the pangs of his own conscience, he is Weislingen, the faithless lover, the untrue friend, who is weak without maliciousness, bipartite and undependable in his bipartition.

He had, early in life, the swain's tendency to fall in love coupled with the genius's fear and dread of being tied down. For two years he loved Käthchen Schönkopf in Leipzig with restless passion and made the poor girl's life miserable through his jealousy over nothing. Then he left her and never felt at ease until the valiant, amiable girl, a year after his departure, became engaged to another man. But he felt the responsibility much more seriously for his flight from the preacher's charming daughter in Sesenheim, the gentlest and most unwary of the young women who loved him, and who, when he left her, was less alive than dead. He erected a monument to her in Gottfried's sister Marie. He thought of himself in Weislingen's infidelity to her. When Goethe shortly thereafter was working at the Imperial Court at Wetzlar, his table companions called him by the pet name Götz; he alone was aware of the fact that he also deserved the name of the other leading character. He even asks Salzmann, October 1773, to send a copy of *Berlichingen*

to Sesenheim and says: "Poor Friederike will feel somewhat consoled when she sees that the faithless lover is poisoned." In other words, he compares himself with Weislingen.

In Georg's relation to Götz there is something of Goethe's own visionary relation to Herder. He even uses in a letter to Herder from the middle of July 1772 the comparison that he, like Georg, is trying to wear the cuirass of the hero and that he will with time grow into it. For the figure of Elizabeth he used his own sprightly, doughty mother as a model. For Lerse's figure he used, with retention of both family name and baptismal name, his favorite Franz Lerse, a young Alsatian, his table companion in Strassburg, now immortalized.

The third element in this youthful work is the part that was wholly invented and therefore to a certain degree the loosest element in the drama, the entire Adelheid episode. As the poet himself in time fell in love with the great, bewitching coquette, this element gradually outgrew all the rest of the drama, and overshadowed it so completely that Goethe in *Götz* took it upon himself to curtail this motif unmercifully. The preponderance of the Adelheid figure disturbs the unity of the drama, veils its fundamental idea, and dissipates its interest. It is strongly executed, though it does not smack especially of reality.

Bielschowsky has expressed the opinion that Adelheid is drawn after the model of the uncommonly beautiful Henriette von Waldner, later Frau von Oberkirch. Adelheid's name, von Walldorf, is supposed to remind one of Frau von Oberkirch's name. But she was only sixteen years old in 1770. More-

over, there is no evidence that Goethe met her in Strassburg. The assumption seems quite untenable. A sixteen-year-old girl as a model for Adelheid! Anyhow, the name never once occurs in Goethe's life.

Franz portrays Adelheid as an enchantress: "Heard of her beauty! That is as if you were to say that you had seen music. It is impossible for the tongue to portray one line of her perfections, since the eye in her presence is no longer itself." And when he describes her at the chess-table he gives her the portrait of a *Mona Lisa*, only coarser, and Germanic:

An exquisitely lowering line about her mouth and on her cheeks. Half physiognomy. Half feeling. Seemed to be threatening more than merely the ivory king. In the meantime nobility and friendship seemed to be sitting like a majestic married couple on her black eyebrows, and ruling with authority, and her dark hair waved like a splendid curtain over her queenly glory.

Adelheid, as a moving force, is the precise opposite of *Götz*: Pagan beauty, which is universal, is contrasted with force and boldness, which is German. She reminds of Ariosto's *Alcina*, of Tasso's *Armida*, and in this Old German world she amounts to a Romance, sense-bewitching fairy.

She has heard so much of this "quintessence of the masculine gender," as Weislingen is called, that she feels drawn to him and is eager to conquer him. She succeeds and for a time her expectations are not disappointed. But she becomes tired of him, as women do when they detect the effeminate trait in a man. Adelbert has been shunted off his real course because Gottfried's superiority pained him.

They had been educated together like two brothers. But undisciplined envy of Gottfried's superiority has induced Adelbert to desert him and ally himself with his enemies.

Adelheid has reckoned that hatred of his great antagonists will arouse all the manly characteristics in Weislingen. Instead of this, she sees him "whining like a sick poet, as melancholy as a healthy girl, as inactive as an old bachelor." She goads him on to combat with his vigorous rivals: "Victoria is a woman; she invariably throws herself into the arms of the bravest." When he finally tries to pull himself together, the nineteen-year-old Goethe puts this baroque, ill-fitting expression in her mouth: "I see in you an arisen, transfigured saint." The expression was destined to be deleted.

With Adelbert she is now done. Pitiable as he is, he becomes a burden to her, and she has him removed from her presence.

But she bewitches the page, Franz, whose youthful passion for her, though extremely sensual, is beautiful. She arouses the gipsy boy's coarse longing, and when she cries for help against him and is rescued by Franz von Sickingen, the second bridegroom of Maria, now deserted by Weislingen, he too is so overcome for a moment that he exclaims: "You were worth a throne." She rejects and sacrifices Franz for his sake. She has a tender affair with Karl, the heir to the throne. And when finally the executioner from the secret tribunal appears in her room, he is likewise overcome and offers to rescue her provided she will give him "what a man in the depth of night can demand of a woman." She

acts as if she were submitting to him, gives him a thrust with a dagger, and is choked by his hands.

It was naturally unreasonable that a drama on *Götz von Berlichingen* should deal so largely with Adelheid. She divided, as has been circumstantially set forth, the action, robbed the drama of its equilibrium, and prevented it from revolving around a central point. It was then entirely proper for the young poet, urged on in all probability by Herder's unfavorable criticism, to force the beautiful sinner into the background and keep her within more narrow limits. Yet the Adelheid episode in the first sketch is fresher and more natural than in the re-casted *Götz* of 1773, not to speak of the arrangement for the theatre of 1804. Formless as *Gottfried von Berlichingen* in general is, quickly and easily dashed off in youthful poetic frenzy, it stands as the outpouring of a fiery soul superior to all artistically better versions, in which there have been now deletions, now rewritings, now additions. The drama has lost in freshness and fullness what it gained in balance and taste. A few juvenilities have been removed; but this could have been done without such a thorough-going operation.

In this part of the work, Shakespeare's influence is especially noticeable. Adelheid is modelled after Shakespeare's Cleopatra. Weislingen stands between her and Marie just as Antonius stands between Cleopatra and Octavia. Both are married to the sister of their confederate; both have married in order to put the seal on the cessation of former hostilities; both desert the women to whom they are bound for the great temptress. And there is, moreover, another sort of Shakespearean situation

back of the drama where the brother appears as the avenger of his sister on the faithless lover. The triumvirate Laertes-Ophelia-Hamlet lies back of Gottfried-Maria-Weislingen, just as it later on lies back of Beaumarchais-Maria-Clavigo, and of Valentin-Gretchen-Faust.

As a matter of fact the frequency with which Shakespearean situations are the models of scenes in Goethe's works is quite conspicuous. Such is the case at the close of *Clavigo* where the lover and the brother meet at Maria's obsequies. Here is a double reminder of the wrestling match between Hamlet and Laertes over Ophelia's grave and the contest between Romeo and Paris at Juliet's bier.

There is accordingly a grain of truth in Frederick the Great's droll outbreak of embitterment against *Götz* in his monograph on German literature. For him the drama is a detestable imitation of Shakespeare's bad English drama.

*On peut pardonner à Shakespeare ces écarts bizarres; car la naissance des arts n'est jamais le point de leur maturité. Mais voilà encore un Götz de Berlichingen qui paraît sur la scène, imitation détestable de ces mauvaises pièces anglaises, et le Parterre applaudait et demande avec enthousiasme la répétition de ces dégoûtantes platiitudes.*

Back of this youthful work lies the idea that the present has fallen from the heights on which the past stood, a level where nature was of more avail than art, boldness more than cunning, and the soundness and power of feeling more than so-called civilization, false and chlorotic as it is. These are opinions which Goethe inherited, with Herder's assistance, from Rousseau, and of which in the

North a number of Oehlenschläger's tragedies, following in the wake of *Götz*, have been the expression.

The recast of the original from the year 1773, for a long time the only one known, kept the spirit of the work unchanged; it simply fused the divergent scenes into a book drama, which had a tremendous success. In the latest version, however, from the year 1804, the sole one from which theatre goers know *Götz*, the spirit of the work is quite different. The great abbreviations were necessary and deserve no particular emphasis since they have nothing to do with the history of Goethe's development. With the alterations it is quite different. They show that the poet has since become a courtier, that he has been a minister, and that he has lived through the French Revolution with anguished horror. He has been a prince's friend and confidant for nearly one generation.

Everything, therefore, that was said in *Götz* against princes and courts, and a good deal of the enthusiasm for liberty, has been expunged. *Götz*'s remark in the first act has disappeared: How we will hold our thumbs over the eyes of the princes! Likewise Sievers' remark: Would to God that we could get at the very life of the princes who draw the cap over our ears! Instead of this we have: A peasant is always as good as a rider, and perhaps even as good as a knight. In the dinner scene of the third act, the thrice repeated "Long live Liberty," is omitted. Likewise the place where *Götz* declares that the next to last of his words in the hour of death will be "Long live the Emperor!" and his very last words will be "Long live Liberty!"

The word *prince* is likewise deleted in Götz's speech: So long as there is no shortage of wine and fresh courage we will laugh at the imperiousness and intrigue of princes.

And it is well to note—parenthetically—that Mephisto's remark in the *Faust* of 1775 concerning the jewel-box runs as follows: I tell you there are things in that box that will win a *princess*. But in the publication of the poem in 1790 these are toned down to the painfully faint observation: I tell you there are things in that box that will win *another woman*.

In the second version of *Götz* for the theatre (for Goethe took up the work also in this new form again and again) the drama does not close with Götz's death and consequently not with the words "Heavenly air—Liberty, Liberty!" etc., but with the convening of the secret tribunal and the speech:

You who abhor outrages, you judges of the deep, work so long as night lasts! Yes, the day will come which will make you superfluous. Arise, thou day of the people, give them joy-bringing activity and let them as a pledge of *lawful* liberty in lustre from above dispose of power and righteousness!

In the various formations of *Götz* from the poet's youth the gipsies are treated sympathetically, as brave vagrants, malefactors of an innocent sort, for whom he, during his *Sturm und Drang* period, had more fellow-feeling than he had for correct plebeians. They steal, to be sure, a duck from a niggardly farmer, but that is justified vengeance; for he refused them a piece of bread; and they take care of Götz at the risk of their own lives so that he is forced to cry out in distress: "O Emperor, Emperor,

robbers are protecting thy children!" In the stage version they have become bands of robbers, fraudulent soothsayers, despicable rogues, who defend Götz for purely selfish reasons since they need a leader. And the gipsies' deceptive chiromancy gives rise to an outbreak of theatrical sanctimoniousness when Georg rejects them with wrath:

Away you ogres! Impudent brood of liars! I depend upon God. What He decrees will happen. I pray to my Saint; he will protect me. Saint George and his blessing!

Götz's relation to Georg has, on the whole, been dragged down into the sentimental.

But this is not the place to dwell long on the changes to which Goethe as *Excellenz* subjected his youthful paean to liberty. When Götz appeared, Goethe stood at one stroke as the spiritual leader of Germany's youth. Herder, who had criticised *Gottfried*, was the most eager to shower unreserved praise on the "sole and eternal Götz." He exclaims "God bless you a thousand times for having written Götz!" The work appeared anonymously; but the poet's name at once spread over Germany; never had a work created such a sensation. For a long time Klopstock and the entire thoroughly-German, old-German party with him had ardently yearned to see the great Germans of the past on the stage. There they stood now in all their boldness and glory. The coming generation had zealously craved and longed for an art that would break with antiquated rules and concern itself with affairs of outstanding and general interest. Here was a superabundance of love, bravery and freedom of speech. Even Klopstock tried to come in touch with Goethe now.

Lavater did the same. Bürger and Voss, and the so-called *Hainbund* of which they were the leading spirits, approached him with enraptured admiration. He was suddenly proclaimed Germany's first author. That the old King, Frederick the Great, whose education had in actuality been French, expressed his wrathful disapproval of the drama, contending that it belonged to the very infancy of dramatic art, was of no particular consequence. It was a lonely voice from the past soon to be drowned out amid the storms of homage from the Germanic reading world.

## CHAPTER VIII

CAESAR—*Mahomet*—*Prometheus*—*Prometheus*  
AND *Faust*—*Götter, Helden und Wieland*—  
*Jahrmarktsfest*—*Pater Brey*—*Satyros*

VIRTUALLY coeval with the idea of *Gottfried*, several other dramatic plans arose in Goethe's mind. Some of these he never even sketched; others never advanced beyond the stage of brief fragments. Among them were *Caesar*, *Mahomet* and *Prometheus*.

Of these three, *Caesar* was the oldest. As we have already seen, the subject interested him while he was in Strassburg. He wished to emphasize the prominent features of Caesar's life just as he had done in the case of *Götz von Berlichingen*. Caesar had also rebelled against the existing order of government. He had likewise been a rebel and, in a broad sense, a heretic after the fashion of heretics about whom Goethe had read in Arnold's history. His was the affair of a superior personality; he was felled by mediocrities. Consequently, Goethe espoused his cause and condemned his assassins. But he soon saw that in order to give his drama unity, as Shakespeare and Voltaire had done, he would have to confine himself to his hero's death. Trouble arose. A drama in which Brutus stood in Caesar's light was quite contrary to the spirit of

the age and the environs in which Goethe then found himself. He could therefore only expect to see his work condemned in the very circles he most wished to please.

He writes therefore, June 1774, to Schönborn saying that his *Caesar* will not please them (his friends), for it was a time when even young, pious German counts eulogized tyrannicide and thirsted after tyrants' blood. In the eighteenth book of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* we have an account of a visit which the Stolberg brothers paid Goethe while he lived in Frankfort:

They had dined together only a few times when, flask after flask of wine having been drunk, poetic hatred of tyrants began to manifest itself, and there was revealed a real thirst for the blood of such monstrous men. My father shook his head. My mother had hardly ever in her life heard of tyrants. She could do no more than recall pictures of them in Gottfried's chronicle. There was, for example, King Cambyses who pierced the heart of the son through with an arrow in his father's presence. She went down to the cellar, got a rare old wine, came back and placed the bright red juice of the grape in cut glasses on the table and said: There is some real tyrants' blood. Drink it and be merry, but don't talk about murder in this house!

And yet almost at the same time something in Goethe began to speak to the advantage of Brutus. In Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente* he wrote, as above mentioned, in 1776, a eulogy on the appearance of Brutus in which individual expressions likewise testify to enthusiasm for the original. He says, for example, that he was great in a world of great men; that he exerted himself as do they who meet with opposition, train themselves in opposition,

and do not fight fate but great men. He is depicted as a man who could endure no lord over him, nor could he himself be a lord, since he derived no pleasure from the thraldom of others.

Whether Goethe in time simply lost interest in the portrayal of the hated Caesar, or whether his sympathy became shaky, cannot be determined. We simply know that his drama on Caesar was never written.

## II

The plan of *Mahomet* never advanced much farther than *Caesar*. This drama was likewise to set forth the struggle, victory, and death of an ingenious personality. More precisely, it was his initial idea to show how the great individual disseminates the divine that is in him, outwardly, so that he eventually comes in conflict with crude and raw surroundings, is obliged to adapt himself more or less to these, and is thereby debased and eventually undone.

As is known, nothing of this drama was ever written except the delightful hymn on the victorious course of genius, *Mahomets Gesang*. Originally, this was an alternating song between Ali and Fatima in honor of their master. It is the song of the spring that gradually swells into a mighty stream, carries everything along with it, and reflects everything in it as it flows. In its triumphant course, it receives brooks and tributary streams, grows from this unimpeded influx, gives a name to the country through which it runs and calls forth cities on its banks until, with fleets on its bosom and flags at its head as so many witnesses to its glory, it carries its

treasures, its brothers, its children, out to the great Ocean, the Old Father, who awaits it with open arms.

### III

In 1773, Goethe began to study Spinoza. On June 28, 1774, he said to Lavater that no one had come so near to Jesus in his commitments on the divine as had Spinoza. He had combatted the Prophets, though he himself was a prophet. That which, thanks to the influence of Herder and Hamann, had been a cherished belief on Goethe's part, now became a settled conviction: God and the World are one, like soul and body, and each individual human being is an expression of the world-god. From this basic point of view he could not fancy gods who were essentially different from himself, and who were superior to him. Nor could he visualize happiness as consisting in subjection to the gods; he could picture it only as being in harmony with the divine cosmic whole.

With this idea in his mind he produced *Prometheus*. Only two short acts were ever completed. But the monologue of Prometheus alone, which Goethe included among his poems, is quite sufficient to insure a poet immortality. The defiance expressed in *Gottfried* has now become titanic. The Titan who revels in power and self-esteem defies the gods, even the god of gods. Everything that Spinoza had taught, everything that Lessing had felt without expressing it before he, to the consternation of Jacobi (see Jacobi's treatise on Lessing's Spinozism), professed this Prometheus, everything that Ludwig Feuerbach later proclaimed is assem-

bled—or anticipated—in this youthful, beautiful, profound poem. A greater poem of rebellion has never been written. It is eternal. Each line is moulded for all time. Each line stands like so many letters of fire in the nocturnal sky of humankind. Few verses that have ever been written on this earth can be compared to it.

*Prometheus* arose from the feeling expressed in Goethe's little poem in which he makes such pleasure as we derive from nature and art dependent upon the creative ability:

Was nützt die glühende Natur  
Vor deinen Augen dir?  
Was nützt dir das Gebildete  
Der Kunst ringsum dich her?  
Wenn liebevolle Schöpfungskraft  
Nicht deine Seele füllt,  
Und in den Fingerspitzen dir  
Nicht wieder bildend wird!

On this account, Prometheus occupies a happy position among the figures moulded by his hand.

The drama is laid out on a quite pretentious scale. It was to give an abbreviated picture of the whole of primitive life: the art of building, the origin of ownership, significance of the first death, and so on. The above mentioned, and truly marvelous monologue, *Bedecke deinen Himmel, Zeus!* with its dawn of the genius of youth, shows that while Goethe's contemporaries were striving after faith in a religion from without, he himself was diligently studying only the real and palpable with reverence and devotion, and was thereby coming to be a pious worshipper of nature as few before or after him.

Superficially viewed, the monologue seems to contain only a denial of God:

Who helped me against the Titans' arrogance?  
Who rescued me from death, from slavery?  
Has thou alone not done it all,  
Holy, glowing heart?

But that there lay no impiety back of this threat against Zeus is best seen from the poem *Ganymed*, which Goethe, in all probability, wrote soon after *Prometheus*, and which in his collection of poems he placed immediately after it. It seemed diametrically opposed in spirit, and yet it was close of kin. The two apparent contradictions really complement each other. Just as Prometheus is the one who despises Zeus, so is Ganymede the one whom Zeus loves and who loves him. The poems, then, are not contradictory but complementary. The god here is not the same as the god there. In *Prometheus* he is the tyrant, here he is the eternal Spring:

How thou glonest upon me  
In the brightness of dawn  
O Spring, my beloved!  
With thousandfold joy of life  
There enters into my heart  
The sacred feeling of thy eternal warmth,  
Thou infinite beauty!

This beloved, this Zeus, is not man's conception of the Almighty, whom Goethe combatted in *Prometheus*; it is the creative power of All-Nature, thoroughly homogeneous with the impulse to create and the joy in creating which characterizes Prometheus.

But while Ganymede conceives of the fountain of

life and the fountain of joy as being outside of himself, yearns for its embrace and suffers dissolution from his longing for this embrace, we detect in various places in *Prometheus* young Goethe's ability to feel, in that moment when he no longer has any yearning, the complete joy and fullness of existence.

The first place is where Prometheus, who has created Pandora as a statue, says to her:

O thou Pandora!  
Thou most sacred vessel for all gifts  
That are joy-bringing  
Under the wide heaven,  
Over the boundless earth  
Everything that refreshes me with the feeling of rapture,  
That in the shady coolness  
Has given me shelter,  
That the love of the sun ever gave me  
In the way of joy in Spring,  
That the warm waves of the sea  
Ever gave me in the way of tenderness  
When they lapped my breast,  
And whatever I have enjoyed in the way of pure heavenly  
splendor  
And peace of soul,  
All that, all—my Pandora!

As is known, *Pandora* means "all gifts." She unites for him all the gifts of existence in *one* being, in *one* moment.

Fate, however, imparts life to the statues of Prometheus. Pandora grows into a beautiful woman who passes in and out of the master's workshop. He converses with her regarding the joy of life. She has known it, she says, as the purest happiness in the kisses of her playfellows; she has known joy when it lifted her feet from the earth, and taught

her to dance. She had also known pain when she ran a thorn in her foot, or wept over a sheep she had lost. Prometheus teaches that joy as well as sorrow are dissolved during sleep. He asks whether she realizes that there are many joys and sorrows of which she knows nothing. Yes, she says, her heart often longs for she does not know what.

Then it is that Prometheus speaks these peculiar and irritating words :

There is a moment which fulfills everything we have ever longed for, dreamed of, hoped and feared. Pandora, it is death.

*Pandora: Death?*

*Prometheus:* When, completely shaken from out of, and in, the depths of your soul, you feel everything that ever coursed through you, everything that has stormed your heart to overflowing, and that has sought alleviation in grief . . . when everything in you rings and quivers and quakes, and you are no longer in control of your senses, so that you fancy you are going to pass away, and everything about you sinks into darkness, while you in your deep, innermost feelings encompass a world—then man dies.

*Pandora: O Father, let us die!*

The first motif is interesting, for like many other passages it shows how familiar young Goethe was with the thought of one comprehensive feeling of the glory of existence in *one* eternal moment. The second motif is interesting, because it portrays natural death, not as the ebb from the fullness of life, but as called forth by the excess of the feeling of life itself, with a combining of everything that has moved the heart to swell in *one* single moment, and then be broken by this very fullness,—which is paradoxical but profound.

## IV

Though not published until 1830, the drama *Prometheus*, which is a trifle older than the poem, belongs to the year 1773, or at the latest to the year 1774, and the last quotation becomes instructive when compared with Faust's wager with Mephistopheles in Part I of the tragedy, since Goethe did not formulate this wager until the year 1798-99: for the scene belongs among the last of Part I.

Judging from the conditions agreed upon, it is plainly Faust's idea that they can never be fulfilled. He regards the glory of the moment as wholly impossible of fulfillment; such an expression he can never make—and he consequently sets death as the penalty should all of this come to pass. Dissatisfied as he is, he feels all too deeply that it is impossible for the hour of absolute satisfaction ever to strike for him.

There is, to be sure, something ambiguous at this point. Faust conceives the satisfaction with the moment as a sign that man's constant striving, the very point wherein lies his deepest worth, would no longer exist for him, that life's supreme flame would be extinguished. That is what the following words, literally translated, mean: "If at any time I lie down in perfect ease upon my bed of sloth, then let all at once be over with me! If thou canst at any time by lying flatter me into making me feel satisfied with myself; if thou canst deceive me with enjoyment, so may that be my last day." But when Mephistopheles agrees and Faust gives him his hand, he adds what goes a great deal further: "If I ever say to the moment, tarry, pray, thou art so fair,

then thou canst put me in chains, then I will gladly be ruined."—And this does not really come about until Faust, old and blind, mistaking the rattling of the spades of the Lemures, who are digging his grave, for the rattling of the spades of masses of people who are building a dam against the encroaching sea—not until then, when, in his delusions, he has visions of a free people on a free soil, does he exclaim: "Now I may say to the moment: Tarry, pray, thou art so fair!"

It is plain that Faust, in his last moments, has by no means abandoned the expectations he cherished before entering upon the wager; by no means has he laid himself down upon his couch of slothful ease. It is in anticipation of the most exalted happiness of the future that he enjoys what is for him the highest moment. And when the hour of death strikes for him, it is the same sort of death of which Prometheus spoke when he created Pandora: When man in his inmost soul perceives in just one moment every thing that has caused his heart to swell so that in his feeling he spans a world—then man dies.

There is a clearly perceptible difference, however, between the genetic thought of *Prometheus* and that of *Faust*. When Prometheus is conceived, Goethe still believes in a Pandora, in a sacred vessel for all the happiest gifts of life; and he believes that the moment can be developed into such a vessel. Back of the wager in *Faust* lies doubt as to the attainment of happiness. We feel that the latter belongs to riper years and more bitter experience. In order to have written this, Goethe must have seen through the nothingness of earthly joys. It is on this account

that Faust says in this connection that the red gold runs out of his hands as quicksilver, that the girl in his embrace is even now making coquettish eyes at the next man, that the beautiful meteor of honor merely appears in order to disappear, that the fruit of life rots before we pluck it.

There can, of course, be no doubt that Goethe, when he wrote the lines that introduce the acceptance of the wager knew that he would, and just how he would, have his Faust come out too short.—What could one expect, what could one imagine, would fill Faust's heart so that he would beg the moment to stay it being too fair to be allowed to fly away? However indigent our lives may be, we all know such moments, each varying according to our individual nature. One feels the greatest happiness in a festive mood, another on the finding of unexpected wealth, another on seeing a charming bit of natural scenery, another on enjoying the best of art, the most excellent of music, another on the satisfying of a long cherished ambition, another as a lover in the moment of confession and union. We could imagine Faust happy either when he found the woman who measured up to his ideals and enraptured him, or when he made some great discovery in natural science, or when he posited a new cosmic theory.

Goethe rejected all of these possibilities, which certainly must have passed before his inner eye, and devoted his undivided attention to one unique problem. Faust anticipates a future in which he has become a benefactor of mankind by presenting it with a piece of ground that will in itself serve as a constant protection against the sea. All of this is

so different that he is no longer mindful of his youthful conviction concerning the slight value of indolent, secure happiness. And in his dying breath, consequently, he utters that immortal sentence: "He alone deserves life and liberty who has to gain them anew, day by day." But so deep, so persistent, despite the emendations in *Götz*, was the love of liberty in Goethe that, as a sage of eighty-two years, he laid down in these verses the sum total of his own wisdom, as well as that of his titular hero, pertaining to the joy of the eternal moment. That joy now consists with him in standing with a free people on a free soil and feeling that he himself has been the creator of this enviable condition.

In this we see a further development of the ideas with which the young disciple of Herder had lived. We detect in truth in various scenes of the original *Faust*, Part I, ideas that go back to the time of his ordination. When Faust turns to magic it is because of the aversion expressed in *Gottfried* to book knowledge as contrasted with that which comes from seeing and beholding. When the Earth Spirit reveals itself to Faust, who cannot even endure the sight, Goethe puts the creed of his own youth in the two expressions: Exalted Spirit, how near of kin do I feel myself to thee! And the reply: Thou resemblest the spirit thou comprehendest!

This last remark strikes Faust rather than Goethe; indeed it overwhelms Faust. Yet it contains a most substantial consolation. It is the good tidings for the lesser mind; the seeking mind is frequently absorbed in the subject of its study and adoration. This is the credo from the age of storming violence: The citizen of the earth is related

to the spirit of the earth; he is a spark of the all-powerful flame.

## V

The newly awakened strength and bold self-confidence in the young poet found expression in a series of short satirical works, the first of which is the little prologue to *Gottes neueste Offenbarungen*, a clever skit with Carl Friedrich Bahrdt as its objective. Bahrdt was a rationalist who had felt called to revise the New Testament. In the place of Luther's trenchant German he had substituted a flat, polished, modernized prose. The little professor sits at his desk writing when he and his much adorned wife are frightened by the tread of animals at the door. The four Evangelists and their followers enter: Matthew with the angel, Mark with the lion, Luke with the ox, and John with the eagle—a whole menagerie in fact. The professor's wife utters a piercing shriek.

Such mighty beards, such long robes, such intricate folds and such wild beasts terrify also Herr Bahrdt. He does not recognize his Evangelists, bedizzened and bedecked as they had been, in his version of them, when not wearing the costumes with which he had fitted them out. The Evangelists depart in disgust.

It is the same motif, with variations, that we have in the matchless farce entitled *Götter, Helden und Wieland*, Goethe's satirical masterpiece from his younger years. Here too an adapter is terrified on seeing gods and heroes, with whom he has played fast and loose, arrayed before him. It is about the

cleverest bit of satire we have from Goethe's pen. Anyone who has had the good fortune to read it and enjoy it in his youth preserves the initial impression of it his whole life long.

If one reads Wieland's now forgotten *Alceste* with the thought of determining whether Goethe, in the arrogant uppishness of a young man, really did the opera an injustice one is forced to let Wieland act as his own attorney. The sole impression derived or derivable from his work is that of unmitigated insipidity. The dramolet, played in Weimar before Goethe's arrival, is nothing but a veritable Olympic contest of noble sentiments—the wife wishes to die for the husband, for example, but the husband declines the offer—in which there is not a single new or unforeseen move and not a single unexpected or surprising observation. If one reads or sees Euripides's powerful drama one feels how modern, how far removed from Greek ethics, it is to have the husband prefer death and thereby spare the feelings of the wife. In fine, Wieland's play is a play of whining and virtue. It is singular, nevertheless, that it is the first attempt in German literature to modernize an antique theme as it was destined to be done in Goethe's *Iphigenie*.

Wieland's *Die Wahl des Herkules*, which Goethe ridiculed just as much as he ridiculed *Alceste*, is also a weak product. The demi-god stands in the middle, with Virtue and Vice at either side. It is inexplicably vapid, and disingenuous in Wieland's mouth, to have Vice portrayed as an alluring woman whose seductive power consists solely in her ability to satisfy natural desires and at the sight of whom action of any sort is paralyzed, even though the action

come from a Hercules! Here, too, Goethe's criticism did not go one step farther than was justified. And without his satire both of the bagatelles would have been buried long ago. And yet, it is probable that a few verses in *Herkules* gave the initial impulse to a few verses in *Faust*:

### HERKULES

O Göttin, löse mir  
 Das Räthsel meines Herzens auf.  
 Zwei Seelen—ach, ich fühl es zu gewiss,—  
 Bekämpfen sich in meiner Brust  
 Mit gleicher Kraft: die bessre siegt, so lange  
 Du redest; aber kaum ergreift  
 Mich diese Zauberin mit ihren Blicken wieder,  
 So fühl' ich eine andere  
 In jeder Ader glühn, die wider Willen mich  
 In ihre Arme zieht.

### *Faust:*

Du bist dir nur des einen Triebs bewusst  
 O lerne nie den andern kennen!  
 Zwei Seelen wohnen ach in meiner Brust.  
 Die eine will sich von der andern trennen.  
 Die eine hält in derber Liebeslust  
 Sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen,  
 Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust  
 Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen.

*Götter, Helden und Wieland* is opened by Mercury just as he is on the point of translating a group of shades to the lower world. He learns from Charon that Admet and Alceste are highly incensed at him. Likewise Euripides, who receives him on the yonder bank of the river where he abuses him roundly for what Wieland has said concerning him in his magazine entitled *Der deutsche Merkur*. Wie-

land has there praised his own *Alceste* at the expense of Euripides's *Alkestis*. Mercury stoutly denies that he has been in any way connected with the enterprise that has usurped his name. Alceste, however, is beside herself with wrath at the two "vapid, haggard, pale little puppets" that are supposed to represent her and her husband.

Mercury's staff then conjures up Wieland as he slumbers in the night. His shadow enters, in night-cap, at the words: "Where is my dream leading me?" The gods and heroes are presented to him: "Are you Alceste, with that figure?" He had never thought of her in that way. (Goethe has apparently anticipated the stout figure of the Venus of Milo, though the statue had not been discovered at the time.) Mercury attacks Wieland who has misused his name, and has treated the two exalted personages so shamefully. Wieland replies by saying that he is under no obligations to pay respect to the names of the heathen gods: "Our religion forbids us recognize and worship any truth, greatness, divinity, or beauty outside of it. The names and statues of your gods are therefore exposed and mutilated." He assures him that he never once thought of Mercury (or of the Greek Hermes) when he gave the title to his journal. "No one thinks anything at all of this; it is as if one said *Recueil, Portefeuille*." In reply to Mercury's objection, "It is after all my name," he asks whether he has not often seen his figure, with wings on the head and feet, painted on snuff boxes, or in other unheroic places.

In five literary epistles Wieland, with no appreciative conception of antiquity or of the value of

Euripides, had drawn attention to his portrayal of Admet and Alceste. Euripides replies energetically to his German critic, and Admet emphasizes the preëminence of the Greek poet, at the same time calling Wieland's attention to the fact that a man who was born when the Greeks defeated Xerxes, who moreover was a personal friend of Xenophon, and whose dramas were influential for an entire century, which can scarcely be said of Wieland's, perhaps knew more about conjuring up the shades of Admet and Alceste than a German poet with all his *delicatesse*. Euripides derides his German rivals: "There is a woman who wishes to die for her husband, a husband who wishes to die for his wife, a hero who tries to die for both, etc."

Wieland replies: "You talk in the manner of men from another world, the sounds of whose language I hear but whose meaning I do not grasp." The answer is droll: "We speak Greek." And not less droll is Euripides's remarks to Admet concerning Wieland: "You forget that he belongs to a sect which makes the dropsied, the tubercular, the palsied, and the tonsilitic believe that when they die their hearts become richer, their minds stronger, their bones more full of marrow. He believes that."

The diminutive farce reaches its climax when Hercules appears. He has just visualized Wieland to himself as a tiny whipper-snapper like him who now stands before him.

*Hercules*: Are you the man who always has Hercules on his lips?

*Wieland* (stepping back): I have nothing to do with you, Colossus!

*Hercules*: How's that? Pray remain!

*Wieland*: I thought that Hercules was a stately man of middle size.

*Hercules*: I, of middle size?

*Wieland*: If you are Hercules, you are not the person I meant.

*Hercules*: That is my name and I am proud of it. I know full well that when a ninny cannot find a shield-holder among bears, griffins, and swine, he uses a Hercules.

The objection, as is seen, is the same that was made to Wieland's conception of Mercury: The mystic figure has become a mere allegory, a mere name. This reoccurs, unfortunately, in the comparisons from Goethe's old age. There is, for example, the ugly passage in the autobiography: "The boy Cupid stubbornly holds fast to the mantle of hope when this is on the point of getting away."

*Hercules*: I see my divinity has never appeared to you in that kind of a dream.

*Wieland*: I confess that this is the first dream of that kind I have ever had.

*Hercules*: Then retire unto yourself, and ask the gods for your notes on Homer where we are too great for you. I believe it, too great.

*Wieland*: In truth you are enormous. I never imagined you like this.

*Hercules*: How can I help his narrow-chested imagination? Who is, pray, his Hercules of whom he boasts so much? And what does he want? For virtue? What is the motto? Have you seen virtue, Wieland? I have knocked about a good deal in the world and I never met such a thing.

*Wieland*: Virtue, for which my Hercules does everything, dares everything, you don't know it?

*Hercules*: Virtue! I heard the word for the first time in my life down here from a few foolish fellows who could not explain it to me.

*Wieland*: I cannot explain it any more than they can. But let us waste no words on this subject! I wish you had read my poems and then you would see that I myself pay precious little attention to virtue. It is an elusive thing.

*Hercules*: It is a monster like all fancy that cannot hold out against the course of the world. Your virtue reminds me of a Centaur. So long as it trots around before your imagination it is glorious, it is powerful! And when the sculptor portrays it to you, how superhuman is its form! Open it up, and you will find four lungs, two hearts, two stomachs. It dies in the hour of birth like any other deformed creature, or is never begotten except in your brains.

This anatomy does not sound especially natural in Hercules's mouth. The weapons against Wieland in this case are not taken from the same arsenal from which those came with which the Greek method of feeling and poetic fancy had supplied Goethe. In the face of anatomy and natural science the Lernean dragon, for whose heads two grew out for each one that Hercules in vain cut off, will likewise not stand the test. And just as little will the Christian angels stand the test, to whose long wings there is no corresponding vertebral muscle, though Goethe himself uses them so strongly at the close of *Faust*, Part II. But the rest of the dialogue is extremely witty, wholly antique in its basic conception of virtue as valor, and in keeping with the eighteenth century in its bold freethinking.

*Wieland*: But virtue must be something, it must be somewhere.

*Hercules*: In the name of my father's eternal beard! Who ever doubted that? And methinks it dwelt with us in half-gods and heroes. Do you think that we lived like cattle? We had the bravest sort of fellows among us.

*Wieland*: What do you call brave fellows?

*Hercules*: One who gives to others what he has. And

the richest is the bravest. If one had a superabundance of muscle, he gave the other a sound thrashing. And remember, a real man never wastes his time on his inferiors; he concerns himself only with his equals, or his superiors. If one had a superabundance of semen, he gave the women as many children as they wanted; I remember having made fifty little fellows myself once in one night. And had Heaven given a third more than it had given thousands, he opened his doors and bade thousands welcome and asked them to enjoy his goods with him.

*Wieland*: The most of all this is counted a vice in our days.

*Hercules*: Vice? That is a fine word too! That is why everything is only half with you, just because you reckon virtue and vice as the two extremes, between which you waver, instead of looking upon your middle position as the positive and the best, as your peasants and servants and maids still do.

*Wieland*: If you were to be found in the possession of such sentiments in our century you would be stoned. Didn't they persecute me violently for my slight attacks on virtue and religion?

*Hercules*: What is there to be attacked? I have fought with horses, cannibals, and dragons, but never with clouds, it made no difference what form they had. He who is wise leaves it to the wind that blows them together to blow them apart in time.

*Wieland*: You are a monster, a blasphemer.

*Hercules*: Can't you grasp that? Your Hercules stands like a smooth-faced fool between virtue and vice. If the two women met me, you see, so—one under one arm the other under the other, and then, march! And both would be obliged to be off and away.

This Hercules does not put to shame Euripides's idea of the demi-god of strength, who, living beyond human conceptions of virtue and vice, can drink and carouse in the house so long as he does not know that the queen is lying therein dead; but when he learns that the queen has descended to Hades and

that Admet has not said anything to him about it simply in order not to break the sacred duties of hospitality, he proceeds, in his overflowing power, to the lower world and fetches the lost one, who died out of tenderness for her husband, up again to the light of day.

## VI

There are three small satiric-dramatic works from this period (1772-73) all written in the same spirit and in the same form, the Hans Sachs doggerel, a form Goethe constantly employed in his youth and even used in the beginning of the definitive edition of *Faust*.

The first is the jocund and jovial *Jahrmarktfest zu Plundersweilern*, the model of Oehlenschläger's far more protracted and far more carefully elaborated *St. Hans Aften Spil*. It consists of fresh and vigorous outbursts in pithy verses, in which the cheerfulness of youthful mood drowns out all literary allusions. In accordance with his lamentable custom, and in a very confusing way, Goethe revised this little farce again and again. In the original plan the market-comedy on Ahasver, Haman, Mordecai and their colleagues, played at the market booths, is intended as a joke on the Rationalists, who called the Bible a pretty poor sort of book, and on the maundering pietists after the fashion of Lavater. In the second version from the year 1789, the market-comedy on the characters above noted is entirely worked over, written in German Alexandrines, and aimed at the French tragedy in general and Racine's *Esther* in particular, without having gained in sprightliness and humor. When Oehlen-

schläger, in 1802, imitated also the comedy within the comedy, he carefully retained the loose doggerel of Goethe's first sketch. There are several places in which the barkers follow their Goethean model quite closely. For example:

## GOETHE

Liebe Kindlein,  
Kauft ein  
Hier ein Hündlein  
Hier ein Schwein,  
Trommel und Schlägel,  
Ein Reitpferd, ein Wägel,  
Kugeln und Kegel  
Kistchen und Pfeiffer,  
Kutschen und Läuffer,  
Husar und Schweitzer,  
Nur ein Paar Kreutzer  
Ist alles dein,  
Kindlein, kauft ein!

## OEHLENSCHLÄGER \*

Smagfulde Pantomimer!  
Peer Dover og Kirsten  
Kimer!  
Valdhorn og Violiner!  
Bajatser og Harlekiner!  
Kager og Appelsiner!  
Insekter og Prospekter!  
Komedier og Tragedier!  
Nye Hegler og Karter!  
Tobaksaaser og Bonaparter!  
Fuglebure og Voksfigurer!  
Af Drikkevare  
En utallig Skare!  
Skynder Jer bare!

Oehlenschläger's picture of Dyrehaven is a united whole; it can be read at any time with pleasure. Goethe's work was never so seriously intended, having been dashed off simply in order to ventilate youthful presumption. But like all of these trifles from his early youth, it delights, not only at a first reading but at a second as well, because of the wealth and fullness of expression, which presages at once of genius and bears the stamp of the lion's claw. Here, as is always the case in the works from this

\* Tasteful pantomimes! Peter Dover and Christina Chimer!  
Bugles and violins, buffoons and harlequins!  
Oranges and cakes, insects and outlooks!  
Comedies and tragedies, hatchles and heckles!  
Snuff-boxes and Bonapartes, bird-cages and wax figures!  
All kinds of drinks! Right this way, Ladies and Gentlemen!

period, there is a good natured emphasis of the sensuous in opposition to pious cant. And now and then we meet with a vulgar expression which in the latest edition, the censor, inspired by a sense of extreme delicacy, has felt constrained to erase.

## VII

Closely related to this is the little farce, *Pater Brey*; also the more elaborated scenes entitled *Satyros*.

The sentimental and hypocritical wencher ridiculed in *Pater Brey*, a certain Leuchsenring, is now wholly forgotten, though the model in this case is a matter of complete indifference. The method employed for his expulsion is also quite infantile. The girl's lover who returns home, disguises himself for a moment as a white haired old man and learns from the young girl that she does not care a straw about anyone but the absent one, and thus ousts, in a good humored way, the importunate consoler of women.

Like Mordecai in the *Jahrmarktfest*, Pater Brey is a variant of Molière's *Tartuffe*. He is even seen through by the green grocer, and he is scorned by the returning captain who hoaxes him away (while he comes to an understanding with his lady friend) by telling him that in the neighborhood there lives a little flock who lead a very sodomitic life: they talk through their nose, go about with stout, inflated stomachs, and sniff at every Christian. Since it is the Pater's especial business and art to convert people who live like wild men, he hastens off in order to improve also these. They show him the way to

the pigsty; he returns embittered and abashed only to be driven away for good and all.

The larger drama, *Satyros*, is, like *Pater Brey*, directed against a false prophet. The leading character is a satyr who, in order to get support and help for an ulcer on the leg, goes to an anchorite in the forest. But this particular anchorite, as distinguished from others, resembles the very embodiment of joy over nature's eternal power to procreate; and he expresses this joy in life in verses that teem with the presumptive young Goethe's power of expression:

Das quillt all von Erzeugungskraft,  
Wie sich's hat aus dem Schlaf gerafft;  
Vögel und Frosch und Thier' und Mücken  
Begehn sich zu allen Augenblicken,  
Hinten und vorn, auf Bauch und Rücken,  
Dass man auf jeder Blüth und Blatt  
Ein Eh-und Wochenbettlein hat.

However much kindness and care the hermit shows the sick satyr, he is dissatisfied with everything; he is not contented with milk and bread; he wants wine and fruit which the hermit does not have. In the latter's absence he complains that his couch is hard and his food imperfect; he tears down the crucifix that hangs over his bed and appropriates anything in the house for which he has use:

Mir geht in der Welt nichts über mich,  
Denn Gott ist Gott, und ich bin ich.

He yearns for young girls and soon wins the beautiful Psyche. When Hermes the Priest appears, he holds forth to him and his parish on the gospel of nature. Clothes are superfluous and

should be dispensed with; men should not live in houses but in caves; they should not cultivate a sad morality but should live as in the days of the Golden Age.

The references to Rousseau are perfectly plain; conspicuous indeed is the boldness with which young Wolfgang, who a short while ago had approached Rousseau through Herder, now ridicules him—only a little later to follow once more in his tracks, in *Werther*.

But more conspicuous is the fact that,—as is suspected from the satyr's fretful disposition and as has been proved by German scholars from Wilhelm Scherer on—none other than Herder himself is the model which hovered before the young poet's mind. This is revealed by his early inclination to react against teachers and philanthropists. It was only recently, as we have seen, that he, in his relation to Herder, had compared himself to the boy Georg, who tries to wear the captain's armor but cannot move about in it. A day never passed without his wishing that he could live with Herder: "That will come to pass! Just wait a while! The boy in the cuirass wanted to ride too soon and you ride too fast." Herder on his part had discarded completely the rôle of protector. In one of his letters we read: "I hear from Goethe only now and then; but however it may all turn out, he is a fellow of life and soul. Whatever he may be he will be it with all his heart and with clenched fists."

There had, of course, been diminutive collisions, but they quickly subsided because of the youth's frank and open method of reacting to injustice. When Wolfgang, the year after his association with

Herder in Strassburg, met the latter's fiancée, and simply by sending the beautiful *Fels-Weihgesang an Psyche* to her, aroused Herder's jealousy, the young man wrote a splendid and sincere letter—it was in July, 1772—in which he said:

I want to tell you that I was angry at your reply to the *Felsweihe*, and called you an intolerant priest. For the expressions "false priest" and "an impudent hand wielded the name" were without justification. If I was wrong in striking a dolorous note to your girl should you on that account go forth with fire and sword prepared to destroy?

Thus far nothing had been able to shake Goethe's exalted opinion of Herder's significance. Now, however, we see that, momentarily at least, Herder appeals to him as an exacting and, so far as women are concerned, inconsiderate person. It is not enough that the Satyr beguiled the youthful Psyche—note that the name is the same Goethe had given Caroline Flachsland in the dedication of the aforesaid poem—he also spread his coils for Eudora, the wife of the unsuspecting priest Hermes. But she sees through him and unmasks him, just as Orontes's wife unmasks Tartuffe. From the sanctuary of a temple, to which the Satyr has withdrawn and from which he has forbidden, on pain of death, anyone to follow him, there comes a loud, piercing shriek, and we learn that he is attempting violence on Eudora. In the god the animal suddenly appears. The Satyr is forced to extract himself from the dilemma by arrogantly boasting of his divine origin. Like his father Zeus, he confers an honor on that man from whose wife he fans the flies. He is disgraced, like Pater Brey, but, built on a larger scale, he departs in haughtiness and with threats.

## CHAPTER IX

### REINHOLD LENZ—MAXIMILIAN KLINGER

WHILE Goethe was thus settling up accounts with individual contemporaries, older and younger, among whom were former patrons and future confederates, a number of young people joined his ranks, the more prominent of whom were for a time regarded as his equals. Reinhold Lenz looked upon himself, and was looked upon by others, as Goethe's peer. Maximilian Klinger wrote a wretched drama entitled *Sturm und Drang*, and thereby gave the name to an entire literary movement.

Reinhold Lenz, the son of a church official, was born at Sesswigen in Lapland in 1750. He had left Dorpat in 1768 and gone to the University of Berlin. He visited Ramler and Nicolai. In the spring of 1771 he came to Strassburg as the tutor of two brothers, barons from Courland, who were to study in Strassburg. No one could have been much less adapted to this kind of work than he. Incapable of controlling himself, he was a poor guide to others.

Lenz had a neat little physique, a handsome head, was blond and blue-eyed, was noted for the vapid strain that was in him, and for his half embarrassed, half reserved nature which could on occasion pass to effrontery. He was rich in moods, whims, and bizarre ideas. He was one of those people who

take up with a spiritual movement in order to make it dogmatic and to exaggerate the significance of its tenets; one of those who convert the living gestures of an age into grimaces. He voiced the enthusiasm of the Strassburg circle for Shakespeare as he had found it expressed there. He affected, when especially cheerful, the tone of the Shakespearean clown. He wrote his work *Anmerkungen übers Theater* after *Götz von Berlichingen* had appeared, but was careful to note on the title page that he had read his monograph to a coterie of Strassburg friends two years before the publication of Goethe's drama. Goethe doubted the contention strongly and with chronological justice. Since he had followed Goethe in everything else it is safe to assume that he followed him here. Lenz no longer attacked Lessing's Frenchman as misunderstanding Aristotle; he attacked Aristotle himself and the rules in the *Poetics*, declaring that the unities of time, place and action were superfluous, praised Shakespeare and his character comedy in excessive language, and fixed the essence of poetry as the imitation of nature. What he really had in mind was the art of reality, or realism.

In actuality it was his acquaintance with Goethe that completely turned the young poet's head and revamped his mind, blithe and bland as this was. He was as far from having an individual point of view with regard to art as with regard to life; he had only an ambition along this line. He was possessed of Goethe and wished first and foremost to be more than his friend; he wished to be his spiritual brother.

He exaggerates every enthusiasm that Goethe

cherishes or has cherished. Of Rousseau he says, for example, in his notes: "Rousseau, even the *divine Rousseau*," and "*Héloïse*, the *best* book that was ever printed in French letters (*mit französischen Lettern*)."<sup>1</sup> He soon developed a sort of talent; his works, the labor of a few years, were full of whims supposed to stand for humor and disfigured by mannerisms, which were supposed to stand for style. This lasts from 1773 to 1776, years in which his loftiest thoughts concerning his supposed genius alternate with disdain for his own ability; strong imagination plays at shifts with his self-contempt.

The decisive trait, however, is his obsession for Goethe. Lenz associates with all the men and women with whom Goethe had associated in the various towns, with Salzmann, Lavater, Herder, Merck, Sophie v. la Roche, later with Wieland whom he, like Goethe, had criticized (Lenz in *Mopsus und Menalkas*). All the so-called *Stürmer und Dränger*, Klinger, Wagner, Kaiser, Maler Müller, became his friends. Half a year after Goethe's departure, he betakes himself, true to his ape-like mission, to Sesenheim and falls in love with Friederike Brion, writes poem after poem to her and, so far as he is able, in Goethe's style. He succeeded in his imitation of Goethe so well that two of the poems, *Ach, bist du fort?* and *Wo bist du jetzt, mein unvergesslich Mädchen*, were ascribed to Goethe and included in editions of Goethe's works, even in the three volume collection entitled *Der junge Goethe* by the *Goethe-Kenner*, Hirzel. This is all the more striking since the last poem, which was superscribed by Friederike *Als ich in Saarbrücken*,

was written while *she*, but neither Goethe nor the author of the poem, was in Saarbrücken.

Lenz's attention to Friederike seems to have been very urgent but ineffective. When Goethe in 1779 returned to Sesenheim on a short visit, he learned from Friederike that Lenz began to call constantly so soon as he had left, and that he was most inquisitive about reports concerning Goethe or letters from him, until Friederike eventually became distrustful and tried to get rid of him. When he assured her that he loved her passionately and in the face of her reserve threatened to commit suicide, it became necessary to send him away on the ground that he was half mad. But she came to the conclusion that his real purpose was to gather material with which he could debase Goethe in public esteem. She revealed her suspicion to Goethe.

Lenz had already (1776) followed Goethe to Weimar, had ingratiated himself at Kochberg into the favor of Frau von Stein who, at the very same time that she was keeping Goethe at a distance with modest dignity, accepted Lenz with calm coquetry as her teacher in English—until he finally committed some bit of asininity (Goethe calls it an *Eselei*) which resulted in his removal. Perhaps he had approached Frau von Stein by following this line of reasoning: If she had loved Goethe, she could also love him. At any rate he read verses aloud in Weimar in which he scorned the relation to Frau von Stein of Goethe as well as that of the Dowager Duchess. He wrote a defense which was regarded as a libel. Goethe had to ask for his expulsion.

It is always the same obsession that leads Lenz on. He is Goethe's shadow, his double; he carries

out his rôle as an actor; he allies himself with him as a fellow-combatant and vies with him as a rival. At first Goethe overestimated him; he believed in his talent. In 1773 he writes to Betty Jacobi concerning him: "A chap whom I love as my own soul" (*ein Junge, den ich liebe wie meine Seele*). When Wieland rejected Lenz's attack, Goethe writes, 1774, to Sophie v. la. Roche: "Lenz is a dangerous enemy for him; he has more genius than Wieland." Goethe acquiesced in Lenz's sending him a manuscript "On our marriage," in which he now seemed to subordinate himself to Goethe, now to place himself at his side, half jestingly, half seriously, but in such a way that the two had to be regarded as indissolubly united. This naïve claim stood out prominently before the public in Lenz's *Pandaemonium Germanicum*, in which Goethe and Lenz (in their own names) are the leading characters who, with similar dress and mutual aid, will ascend a symbolic Parnassus. Here also, Wieland, Klopstock, Herder and Shakespeare appear in person. In Lenz's *Der Waldbruder* there are likewise two friends and rivals, Herz and Rothe, that is, Lenz and Goethe, who are placed opposite each other.

When Lenz published his drama anonymously, it was ascribed to Goethe by the majority and compared to *Götz*. Both Klopstock and Voss believed in all seriousness that *Der Hofmeister* was by Goethe. Herder even writes (November 14, 1774) to Hamann: "Goethe now has Lenz as a rival in his career."

In the fourteenth book of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe has given a profound psychological study of Lenz's character as he knew it. He com-

plains of him without anger or bitterness, though he takes it quite seriously that he published *Götter, Helden und Wieland* without his knowledge and against his wish, and intrigued in general against his former comrade. But he excuses this intrigue on the ground that it was unintentional, roguery for roguery's sake, and shows that Lenz always lived in a chimera, that his hatred as well as his charity was imaginary, that he never benefited those he loved and that he never harmed those he hated. His days were made up of a heap of nothings; he could waste so many hours because of his excellent memory which retained everything and made it bear fruit. He lived, besides, in Strassburg mostly with officers of the garrison and, fantast that he was, he gradually came to believe that he was a connoisseur of all things pertaining to military affairs. He even sent in a *Promemoria* with some good advice to the French minister of war.

As Goethe's double, he lodged with the poet's parents while on his visit to Thuringia. He followed Goethe to Emmendingen where Schlosser lived after his marriage with Cornelia. He became a most intimate friend of the family. He loved Cornelia, in his fantastic way, about as he had loved Friederike and Frau von Stein. In 1777, he experienced Cornelia's death. It was while in Schlosser's home that his grief manifested itself in madness and raging so that, after the usage of the time, he was put in chains as an insane person. Quite incapable of doing mental work of any description, he was given an asylum in the home of a shoemaker in Emmendingen where Conrad, the son of the family, became his dearest companion. He himself learned

the shoemaker's trade. Having regained his health, he went first to St. Petersburg and then to Moscow, where he died in 1780.

The individual who approaches Lenz's works with confident expectation is doomed to a grievous disillusionment. His inane hatred of the unity of place gave rise to a change after every third or fourth speech with the result that hopeless confusion ensues. Of the spirit of rebellion, apart from the realm of the æsthetic, there is hardly a shimmer. In the drama there is a thick vein of plebeian moralizing.

Ludwig Tieck, in order to taunt the aged Goethe, endeavored to persuade the reader in the introduction to Lenz's works, 1828, that Lenz, with his vigorous depiction of reality, was following a wiser course than Goethe with his trend toward the ideal, the antique, the faraway, the foreign. He quotes Goethe's remark: "Ah, when I erred and went astray, I had a host of comrades," and then asks: Was he, then, in his youth really on the wrong road? And further on he raises the question why this demigod left his fatherland so soon? Perhaps "because all of his flowery dreams did not mature," as we read in Goethe's *Prometheus*.

Grant that the elder Goethe's preference for the remote and the antique was by no means invariably correct, it remains, despite this concession, quite impossible to play off a Lenz against Goethe. Lenz's dramas are prose and nothing more. His once famous drama entitled *Der Hofmeister* is supposed to serve as a warning against tutorial positions. We are shown how such an occupation incapacitates for life, promotes laziness and luxury,

and through its obligatory servility causes the bitterness of humiliation. The tutor in this case has to adapt himself to the major's rude caprices and the haughty and arrogant commands of the major's wife. The boy whom he is supposed to educate cannot be persuaded to study. The young daughter, who is thoroughly in love with an absent lover, allows herself to be seduced by him, becomes with child, and is straightway driven from the home. The tutor flees.

He and the daughter both become completely unhappy but are liberated in the end. The tutor castrates himself by way of punishment for his misdeed but becomes almost immediately acquainted with a young and beautiful woman who loves him at first sight and would gladly marry him despite his wretched condition. The aristocratic young girl's fiancé then marries her regardless of her checkered past and the child she has borne.

The characters shift and waver from act to act. At first the tutor is lazy and servile but grimly enterprising in the presence of the young lady. He is merely pitiable and whining; he is contrite to the point of self-castration; he is so eager for the renewed life incident to the innocent love of which he is the object. The moral of the drama is distinctly puerile; it warns against bringing tutors into the family: One never knows what it may lead to.

The same is true of Lenz's other drama entitled *Die Soldaten* and once the equal of *Der Hofmeister* in popularity. It also has a plebeian moral warning: Never admit officers, who go about from garrison to garrison, to the women of the family. The virtue of women lies almost unnaturally close to the heart

of the young poet, famed for his multifarious infatuations.

When the tutor Läuffer protests against the fact that the Church preserves the teaching of the Devil and the story of Lucifer's rebellion, a second person is expressing Lenz's opinion concerning the aims of Enlightenment as set forth in the slogan: "In our enlightened day, no one any longer believes in a Hell." The reply is also in accord with Lenz's own heart: "Consequently the entire rational world will go to Hell." Obscurantism did not frighten the absolving youth from that period of Enlightenment.

The tutor discourses as follows:

Take it for granted that our teaching in regard to faith is superstition! In case you eradicate superstition, real faith disappears too, and there remains nothing but a barren waste in the realm of the spirit. Take superstition from the rabble, and they will assault you. Take the Devil from the peasant, and he will become a devil in opposition to his lords.

The fundamental idea of *Die Soldaten* is contained in a speech of the Countess to the young Marie, who says: "He loves me, but . . ." The Countess replies:

An officer's love, Marie, is the love of a man who is accustomed to all manner of dissipation, who ceases to be a good soldier the moment he becomes a steadfast lover. And since he has sworn to his king not to be anything but a loyal soldier, you have to abide by the consequences.

In these dramas the moral of the young revolutionist is not dissimilar to that which Kotzebue, a few decades later, preached in his plays. Now and again, Lenz as a poet of rebellion recedes to his

starting point, that is, to Rousseau. We note this change in his *Der neue Menoza*—an unqualifiedly unimportant drama, though it was at that time highly regarded and widely discussed.

It contains an attack on European culture. The exotic prince says:

I shall leave you in peace and go home to the end that I may enjoy my inheritance in all innocence, rule over my country, and build a wall around it so that everyone who comes from Europe must first be quarantined before he multiplies his pestilences among my subjects.

Herr von Biederling replies:

You have failed to familiarize yourself with our horticulture. . . . You would have to remain with us for ten or twenty years before you learned how we are superior to all the nations of the earth.

The Prince:

Superior—in fraud and rascality. . . . All that you gather together remains lying on the upper surface of your reason, and degenerates into wile. Feeling you know not; you are not even familiar with the word. What you call feeling is merely varnished lasciviousness; what you term virtue is merely the paint with which you touch up brutality.

Lenz has all the essential earmarks of megolomania: lack of character, lack of bearing, envy, and importunate intimacy when in the presence of the really great. With him and Goethe it is always a case of *Du* and *Ich*, You and I, we two.

## II

Maximilian Klinger, incessantly linked with Lenz, was of a different mould—superior as a man, quite inferior as a poet.

Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger (1752-1831), like Goethe, was a son of Frankfort. His father, unlike Goethe's, was an indigent policeman, and after his death his mother supported the family as best she could by running a little grocery store. The son had to fight his way through life unaided and unassured. The oppressions of his youth bred in him a hatred for all oppression and inspired him with a fighting disposition; the young *Stürmer und Dränger* who owed their name to him, regarded him as the chieftain of the spiritual revolution; by Heinse he was even called "the lion, king of beasts"; by Wieland the vampire (*Der Blutsäufer*).

He was tall, slender, well built, with regular facial features, fond, however, of giving himself a superingenuous appearance. He had good manners and good faculties, docility, a strong memory, and uncommon ability as a linguist. Plebeian prudes said of him that he drank, ate raw meat, and was consumed by sexual dissipation. The really leading features of his disposition were firmness, steadfastness, and a proud feeling of independence. America, as the continent of the great republic, was the land of his longing. If Rousseau had been a significant element in the development of Herder, Goethe, and Lenz, for a personality like Klinger's Rousseau must be everything. Lenz wished to see two statues erected side by side, those of Shakespeare and Rousseau. Klinger would have been satisfied with one, that of Rousseau. *Emile* was his fundamental book, his Bible. He himself felt that he was a child of nature; everything was good as it came from nature's hand, everything was spoiled by the hand of man, was his unadorned confession of faith just as it was

that of the citizen of Geneva. Even as an old man he wrote of Rousseau: "The young man who has no guide should choose this one. He will certainly lead him through life's labyrinth and equip him with power to endure the struggle with fate and with mortals."

Whether he owed it to himself or to the Frenchman of Switzerland, there was certainly no lack of this power in him. He became a general at the Russian court, curator of a university, the favorite of the Zar, and as an older man reknitted the bond of cordial friendship with Goethe, with whom in his younger days he had constantly associated.

If Lenz as a poet was full of provincial morality, there is at least the spirit of social rebellion in Klinger. And if Lenz's style is full of mannerisms, Klinger's is full of exclamations.

As the unique product of the movement, one reads *Sturm und Drang* with astonishment. The speeches of the young men in the play sound like those of insane persons, consisting as they do of disjointed, hardly explicable, sentences. Confusion is so rampant that the *dramatis personae* do not know, at the beginning of the play, that they are in America. Having arrived in the country and being under shelter, the leading character, who is significantly called *Wild* though he has another civilian name, says to his followers:

In order to help you at one blow out of your dreams, let me tell you that I led you from Russia to Spain in the belief that the King of Spain would begin war against the Grand Mongolians. But since the Spanish people are lazy the King is too. So I again prepared to travel and here you are now in the midst of war in America. Ah, let me enjoy

to the full the fact that I am standing on American soil where everything is new and replete with meaning.

To this the hero's associate, *La Feu*, says:

War and murder! O my bones! O my guardian angels!  
—Pray give me a fairy adventure! O woe is me!

Here a third leading party, called *Blasius*, breaks in in the same delirious tone:

Would that the lightning would strike you dead, you insane Wild! What have you done this time? Is my Donna Isabella still alive? Heh! Can't you talk? My Donna!

When one recalls what a sensation this play created, and what significance lay in its title for later years, one would suppose that, just as the style anticipates Schiller's *Räuber*, the action would likewise have something of the spirit of social revolution in it. But as a matter of fact the play revolves around a story of grievance and vengeance in the life of private individuals.

Lord Berkley of Scotland, sixty years old and a wreck, has suffered a grievous injustice in his native land and is now living in North America. He is in his dotage. He has lost his reason out of grief over his former friend and present enemy, Lord Bushy, who has stormed his castle, set it on fire, driven him and his good wife and his little Jenny half naked from their home. Lord Berkley sits now day in and day out building houses of cards that tumble down as fast as he builds them and remind him of his devastated castle. He is nursed in this condition by his daughter, the above-mentioned Jenny who, no one knows why, is called Car-

oline. In his delusion the old man always addresses her as *Miss*, without affixing her baptismal name (as though the author could not write English). He constantly says: No, Miss!, Heh, Miss!

Miss Caroline cannot share her father's immeasurable hatred of the Bushy family for she loves Lord Bushy's son; him she can never forget: Was his name not Carl, did he not have blue eyes and brown hair, was he not larger than any of the boys of his age, was he not beautiful with his red cheeks, and was he not her steadfast cavalier?

But Carl Bushy is not unworthy of her. It is namely he who, under the name of Wild, has led his comrades to America on the ground that he is spending his life in the search after phantoms. He sees the picture of his beloved Caroline in the distance and seeks her in continent after continent.

Wild is gruff and stern to his comrades, though they cannot resist him, perhaps because he is so big and powerful, perhaps because they are even less rational than he. Read for example this bit of dialogue:

*Blasius*: I loathe you, Wild! I wish that you would leave me alone for a while.

*Wild*: Does it occur to me to pursue you?

*Blasius*: I cannot endure you. Your strength is contrary to my nature, as is also the fact that you are constantly chasing after phantoms—I hate you!

*Wild*: As you like! At times you love me.

*Blasius*: (Embracing him) Who can resist you!—Boy, boy! I have a worse disposition than you. I am inwardly torn asunder and incapable of reuniting the threads. I want to be melancholy. No, I don't want to be anything. You saw my noble horse pull a small cart in Madrid. I grieved in the depths of my soul and Isabella dried away my tears. Glory of this world! I can no longer pluck your flowers.

Yes, he who has lost his senses, who has lost thee, eternal love, thou who holdest all things in us together!

That sounds as though it had been written by a schoolboy in the first class, or in the next to the first class. The author is not only no artist; he also lacks that sanity and balance indispensable to the creation of a character that does not act contrary to all principles of reason. One of the young men pays violent court to a ridiculous old woman, for he loves to find himself in an illusion; man must always dream, never think, in order to be happy. Another of them is silent and reserved in the presence of a beautiful young girl who loves him and cheers him up in vain until she at last makes demands of him as if she were a minx.

Naturally the lovers find each other and one of the numerous recognition scenes takes place. He: "Here I find what I have looked for in vain the whole world over. You are an angel, my lady, a magnificent, soulful creature. I came here in order to allow myself to be shot in the next battle and—and I will let myself be shot dead."—Recognition.—She: "Good Carl, you are still the same wild, brave boy."—He: "And so I find you here, Miss Berkley, and I shall keep you here, and what Wild keeps—I could choke your father in order to possess you."—The father comes and contents himself with saying bitterly: Adieu, Miss!—The old man seems to recognize the features of his enemy in the young man, and yet he is almost obliged to do violence to himself in order to keep from falling on his neck. In reality he is quickly reconciled. Less prompt at reconciliation is his son, a sea captain, who chafes for revenge

against the Bushy family for having placed the old Bushy in a boat and let him drift at sea. A happy fate drives him to land however, and he follows up Wild, the young Bushy, with his cannibal-like hatred. They shoot at each other but each comes off with his life. The old Lord Bushy at last appears in order to make his peace with his mortal enemy. This is achieved through the ridiculous explanation which he has kept until the very last, that all of this family hatred is based on a pure misunderstanding: "Berkley, one does not lie at the hour of death and I have never lied. Here where truth and untruth are separated, I tell you that I am wholly innocent of the desolation of your home. The one who caused the misfortune has long since lain in the valley of death." And he embraces Berkley.

It is not enough that the style is intolerable; it is also parodic. When Wild climbs a tree in order to reach Caroline's room, the fair one exclaims: "Hold fast, my beloved! Branches have been known to break." He replies: "I am hanging on your eyes." When the Captain has challenged Wild, old Berkley asks him whether he will not be seated at the table. He replies: "At any rate, only as a cannibal, Mylord! I yearn for the Captain's flesh."

Klinger wrote in addition to this drama an entire series of other dramas, among which *Otto* is the best known in Germany because it is the first drama of knighthood after Goethe's *Götz* which, as is known, provoked a veritable welter of dramatic literature on knighthood. Aside from having been influenced by Goethe, however, *Otto* also owed a great deal to those poets who aided in the creation of a new dramatic norm. *Otto* contains three par-

allel actions, the first of which is modeled after the motif of Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*; the second follows the Gloucester motif in Shakespeare's *King Lear*; the third imitates the basic motif in *Othello*. Where Goethe rests on Shakespeare, his associates and imitators rest both on him and Shakespeare.

If one should seek in *Sturm und Drang*, this inchoate and notorious trash that has just been reviewed, for leading ideas or fundamental thoughts, one would be forced to say that they consist in an emphasis of human individuality. This is what the writers of the period regarded as the original and meritorious element as contrasted with social forms and class distinctions. The human is the finest, and the most easily vulnerable. It is on this account that we hear so much in the productions about affronting and offending and disgracing *mankind*, about rescuing *mankind's* honor. Goethe writes scornfully in *Götter, Helden und Wieland*: "You people all belong to the great family known as *mankind's* dignity—an idea abstracted from God knows where." Lenz writes of Shakespeare: "Wretched indeed is he whose bosom is not made to swell and who is not brought to feel the vast compass of the word *Mensch* on reading works of this sort."

Man's enemies are convention and custom, both of which are attacked in every scene. But they are attacked no more vigorously than are honor and prejudice, the servants and messengers of propriety. The *heart* on the contrary is the highest tribunal; it is even more: It is omnipotent. It is a question of listening to the voice of the heart. To understand the heart is wisdom; to follow it is virtue.

Before the days of Goethe that idea was neither

intelligible nor accessible in any form other than the moral. One worked out the good or the bad moral that was to be deduced from a book; the moral was the thing. This explains why *Werther* was regarded either as a recommendation of or a recipe for suicide. That it was possible to build up a free and original work of art on inner experience had never occurred to anyone. But for Goethe poetry was merely a confession of inner experiences: "The thing that makes a poet is a full heart, full of just one feeling." The heart is the creative power; this explains the commitment from Prometheus: "Hast thou alone not done everything, thou holy, glowing heart!" This explains too the fact that in *Werther* we have the programme of the book, so to speak, in the very first lines: "Best friend, what is the heart of man!" And later on: "Our heart alone creates its happiness."

## CHAPTER X

### WETZLAR AND GOETHE—*Werthers Leiden*— *Werthers Renown*

IF we look back over the leading male characters in the works of Goethe's youth, it is quite difficult to escape a distinctly unfavorable impression—that of the unmanliness of these young men. In all of them, in Werther, and even more so in Clavigo and Fernando, not to speak of Weislingen, there is a pronounced element of weakness. We detect this indeed in Faust himself. In the case of Werther, this impression is strongest at the close of the book, a close that casts a cloud over the beginning. Modern ethics, the temperaments and sensibilities of the present, are repelled: A young man takes his life out of despair at being separated from a woman who seems quite satisfied in and with her union with another man, and who in any event can endure life without him.

Modern critics have taken to jeering Goethe because he did not commit suicide on finding himself in Werther's situation. No derision could be more absurd. Why in the name of all that is reasonable should Goethe have taken his life? People affect to feel nowadays that it was a sort of belated duty he owed himself. They refuse to believe that any great seriousness is to be attached to the suicidal

thoughts by which he portrays himself as having been plagued at that time. They insist that he never really thought of sending the well-polished dagger, which he kept suspended at his bedside during those days, through his heart. What are we to understand here by "seriousness?" If the term connotes only and entirely the dwelling on such ideas of suicide as eventually lead to death, then he was not "serious." But Goethe wrote very explicitly to Zelter in 1812 (he was then sixty-three years old): "I am fully conscious of the decisions, resolutions and exertions that it cost me to escape from the waters of death." He told the whole truth when he said he wrote the novel in order to liberate himself from these feelings. Moreover, he never pretended that he felt precisely as did Werther.

Following out his father's wish, he came in the spring of 1772 to Wetzlar to practice law. The lamentable condition in which the Court at Wetzlar, then the highest tribunal in Germany, found itself, the antiquated system under which it then worked, may be seen from the fact that no fewer than 16,000 cases were then on the calendar, not a one of which was removed unless a great bribe or still greater favoritism aided in effecting a settlement. Goethe seems to have done not the slightest bit of juridical work. No trace of his stay in Wetzlar has ever been found other than the fact that he entered his name in the register on his arrival. He read Pindar and Homer. Even if he had been a more zealous jurist than he was, he would have found something to do only with difficulty. Five years previous to his coming, Emperor Joseph II had sent twenty-four chosen men as an investigating committee to Wetzlar in

order to correct the existing conditions. They investigated for four years and sent three judges, who belonged to the peerage, to jail on the ground of bribery, but in the fifth year they themselves were so affected by the situation that a sharp rupture arose among them and a complete cessation of all work at the court ensued.

The town itself was ugly and murky; but beyond the gates spring had come in all its full-blown splendor. "Every tree, every hedge is a nosegay, and one would gladly be a beetle in order to hover about in this sea of fragrance." Just outside the little town was a well where Goethe sat for an hour each day and looked on as the girls came from the village to fetch their water—"the most innocent and necessary task that in olden times was attended to by the daughters of the king." He liked to lie down by one of the little brooks that flowed into the Lahn, hidden in the tall grass, with his back against a tree and his Homer in his hand, as he was lying the first time Kestner saw him. He walked to the nearest village, Gartenheim (Wahlheim in *Werther*) and there he found a quiet place by the church between two big old linden trees, which he liked best of all. Thither he had his table and chair and milk brought from the inn, and there he joked with the village children and made drawings. All the children surrounded him, they all liked him, especially three small boys no one of whom was over four years of age. They each received a creutzer daily so that the mother could buy a bit of fresh wheat bread for the soup.

At the inn *Zum Kronprinzen* where he took his midday meal he found a lively company of young

jurists the most of whom, like himself, took their work anything but seriously. They offset the tediousness of the law by playing all manner of jokes. Among other diversions, they formed a sort of round table and instituted an order of knighthood. But knights they hardly were.

To this circle there belonged two secretaries of the legation, though they were very infrequent visitors. One of them came from Brunswick, the other from Bremen. The one was Wilhelm Jerusalem, an insular, irritable, pessimistic young man who could not endure Goethe and who never came into really close contact with him. The other was Johann Christian Kestner, Goethe's senior by eight years, a Hanoverian by birth and an excellent individual. He was calm, clear-headed, and a little dry, but remarkably conscientious as a jurist despite his warm feelings and many-sided interests. Both were destined to have the greatest significance for Goethe's most popular work from his younger days. Jerusalem served as a model for Werther as a suicide; Kestner was fused with the grim old husband of the charming Maxe Brentano and caricatured as Albert.

Five years previously, in 1768, Kestner had become engaged to Charlotte Buff, then fifteen years old. She was the daughter of the ranking official of the German Order at the city. She was blond and blue-eyed, healthy as healthy could be, and possessed of a charming personality. She was always happy, quite efficient and thoroughly dependable. Of sixteen children that the official had had, eleven were still living. The mother was dead. The oldest daughter was less capable than Charlotte, the second oldest, upon whom devolved the task of taking the

place of a mother to the other ten and assuming general responsibility for the large household. Though only nineteen years of age, she attended to her duties with remarkable ease. For reading and study she had no time.

Goethe became acquainted with her at the little ball given on Pentecost evening by the young men from the Imperial Court at Volpert's house a short distance from Wetzlar. The rapture he straightway felt at the sight of her is known the wide world over. Scarcely since the glorification of Beatrice by Dante and Laura by Petrarch has the passion of any other poet been so famous.

Kestner's method of enduring the handsome and captivating young Goethe as a rival was admirable; Lotte's conduct was no less worthy and beautiful. An actual collision was avoided, or almost so. All three were united by ties of cordial friendship. But in the month of August the clouds began to gather. Goethe's passion could hardly be controlled any longer, he was jealous of Kestner and Kestner was jealous of him. A kiss which he stole from Lotte, and of which she complained to her fiancé, brought on strained feelings. In the middle of August Goethe conferred, while in Giessen, with Merck, who saw Lotte, then on a visit in Giessen, and who could estimate her real worth, though he chided Goethe and advised him to break off all connection with her. On September 11, Goethe departed in complete silence without even saying farewell.

Scarcely ten days later he had a friendly meeting with Kestner in Frankfort. They threw themselves into each other's arms. On October 30 Jerusalem shot himself in Wetzlar because of an unhappy love

affair with a young woman, the wife of a secretary of one of the embassies. From November 6 to November 10 Goethe was again in Wetzlar gathering all the information he possibly could on the death which Kestner had reported to him immediately, but concerning which he was obliged to send him a detailed account in writing.

In January, 1774, the newly-married Brentanos came to Frankfort. The husband was fully sixty years old and had five children by a former marriage. His wife was a charming young woman with a liberal education. And there she sat now, tied down, surrounded by the stench of oil and cheese, in the dingy store of her husband in Frankfort. Goethe came and accompanied her on the piano with the cello. Brentano was no friend of musical duets. "Frightful moments" ensued.

Not until February, 1774, a year and a half after his departure from Wetzlar, fifteen months after Jerusalem's death, but immediately after the outbreak of Brentano's jealousy, Goethe began to write *Werther*, and in four weeks the book was finished. The entire first part he had, in all probability, practically finished in the meantime by the use of his letters from Wetzlar to Merck and to his sister Cornelia. But if we consider the time that Goethe allows to pass between the experience and the composition we will understand why it is written with the peace of mind that is so noticeable in the first part, abounding as it does in healthy and vigorous vitality. And by comparing the tone of the letters to the Kestners with those of the more passionate parts of the novel we will easily see where Goethe follows reality and where he does

not. Despite the inevitable melancholy, the tone of the letters is frank and free, youthful and bold, whereas *Werther* is distempered and elegiac, especially toward the close.

Just before the writing of *Werther* was begun in January, 1774, we have an effusive letter from Goethe on the merriment of the skating party. The ice cracked and creaked, the people fell and looked outlandish, and so on :

Yesterday we ate roast venison and jelly tart and drank a great deal of wine and dined with houris until one o'clock in the morning. . . . From the new Mayor, Herr Reuss, where I in a costume of scarlet and gold announced the New Year—Whither?—To the Rhine, coachman! I up the steps, where the bell rope was still hanging in the corner.—Shall I ring?—Then comes little Käthe.—Do you still know me?—The door is opened, I take her affectionately by the head and precipitate a misfortune with her coiffure.—I present myself.

That is all poles removed from the close of *Werther*.

Shortly after having made Goethe's acquaintance, Kestner gives, in a letter to a friend, the following remarkable characterization of the poet and lover, then only twenty-three years old, and necessarily repellent to the older and more sedate man in many ways :

He has many talents; he is a true genius and a man of character. He has an extraordinarily vivid imagination, which explains the fact that he generally expresses himself in pictures and similes. He himself is accustomed to say that he always speaks figuratively; when he gets older he hopes to think and to express his thoughts just as they are. He is impetuous in all his feelings though he has himself remarkably well in control. His way of thinking is noble.

He is free from prejudice and acts on the impulse without bothering himself as to whether it pleases others, as to whether it is the fashion, or as to whether good breeding permits it. He hates all coercion. He loves children and can busy himself a great deal with them. He is odd and has in his conduct, in his external appearance, a number of features that might make him disagreeable. With women and children and many others he stands nevertheless in excellent repute. For women he has an extraordinary regard. *In principiis* he is not yet quite fixed and is still striving after a definite system. . . . He is not what you would call orthodox, though not out of pride or capriciousness or affectation—he discusses the leading questions along this line only with a very few, he is reluctant about disturbing others in their calm ideas. . . . He hates skepticism and strives after truth. . . . He does not go to church, nor to the confession, and he rarely prays; since,—as he says, I do not wish to be a liar to boot. . . . For the Christian religion he has a very high regard, though not in the form in which our theologians present it. . . . He strives as we have said after truth, lays however more weight on the feeling of truth than on proofs of it. He has already accomplished a great deal and has a considerable store of information, has read much, but has not as yet thought or reasoned a great deal. His chief study is the liberal arts and sciences, or more correctly speaking, he studies all sciences except the professional ones. . . . He is in a word a quite remarkable man.

If we compare with this portrayal the conversation between Gretchen and Faust in the catechization scene we will see how exactly the portrayal fits:

*Gretchen*: Nun sag, wie hast du's mit der Religion? Du bist ein herzlich guter Mann.

(With women he stands in excellent repute.)

*Faust*: Lass das, mein Kind!

(He discusses the leading questions of religion only with a very few.)

Du fühlst, ich bin dir gut.

(For women he has very great respect.)

*Für meine Lieben liess, ich Leib und Blut.*

(His way of thinking is noble.)

*Will niemand sein Gefühl und seine Kirche rauben.*

(He is reluctant about disturbing others in their calm ideas.)

*Gretchen:* Das ist nicht recht, man muss dran glauben!

*Faust:* Muss man?

(He is free of prejudice. He acts on the impulse. He hates coercion.)

*Gretchen:* Du ehrst auch nicht die heil'gen Sacramente.

*Faust:* Ich ehre sie.

(For the Christian religion he has a high regard.)

*Gretchen:* Doch ohne Verlangen.

*Zur Messe, zur Beichte bist du lange nicht gegangen.*

(He goes neither to church nor to confession.)

*Glaubst du an Gott?*

*Faust:* Wer darf sagen

Ich glaub' an Gott?

(He hates skepticism, strives after truth, etc.)

*Gefühl ist alles.*

(But he lays more weight on the feeling of truth than on the proofs of it.)

*Name ist Schall und Rauch.*

(He expresses himself mostly in pictures and similes.)

*Gretchen:* Ungefähr sagt das der Pfarrer auch, nur mit ein bisschen anderen Worten.

*Faust:* Jeder in seiner Sprache.

*Warum nicht ich in der meinen?*

(He is not orthodox, esteems religion, but not in the form in which our theologians present it.)

We have already remarked that *Werther* in the first part, where Goethe alone is still the model, is entirely too wholesome and strong to be thought of as a suicide. His nature sense is especially healthy. Such a feeling for nature had hitherto never been detected in a German novel. *Werther* does not describe nature, nor does he exploit such

designations as Luna and Zephyr (as Goethe did in his oldest poems). Everything is steeped in feeling. He feels life pulsating in nature, and he feels its echo in his own breast:

When the lovely valley round about me exhales its vapor, and the sun rests at midday on the upper surface of the impenetrable darkness of my forest and only individual rays steal down into its sanctuary, when I lie then in the high grass by the babbling brook and nearer down to the earth a thousand different grasses of smaller kind become visible, when I feel the swarming of the little world between the blades, and countless and unfathomable little figures of the insects and gnats closer to my heart, and feel the presence of the Almighty who created us in His image, the fluttering of the All-Loving through space who bears us up and holds us in light eternal, my friend, when my eye becomes wrapped in dusk and the world about me and the heaven in my soul rest like the figure of a beloved—then I am seized with longing and this thought comes to me: Oh, if you could only express, if you could only breathe into the paper, all this that lives so warm and full in your soul so that it would be the mirror of your soul, just as your soul is the mirror of the infinite God! My Friend! But I court ruin in the desire; I succumb quite to the power of the glory of all I have seen.

This is the extent of his intimacy with nature; he has confidence in her; she becomes confidential and precious to him; he strives to reproduce nature.

That the feeling is Goethe's own is proved by the fact that it returns, expressed in the same way, only with less theological coloring, in Faust's monologue, *Erhabener Geist, Du gabst mir, gabst mir Alles*. The Spirit gave him Nature in all its glory as his kingdom, the power to feel it, to enjoy it, and the gift to look deep down into it as he would look into the heart of a friend. He feels like Adam: Thou

leadest the files of the living by me, and teachest me to recognize my brothers in the peaceful bush, in the air, and in the water.

Werther who, as an artist, wishes to reproduce nature and is grieved when he cannot find the right word, wishes to feel divine, superhuman; he wishes to have nature arise from within his own heart; he would feel the instinctive joy in life that other creatures have, particularly that of the birds in their flight:

How often have I longed to fly far away to the shores of the unmeasured sea on the wings of a crane which had flown above me, so that I might drink the swelling, seething joy of life from the foaming beaker of the infinite! How I have longed to feel even for a moment that there was in the pent-up enclosure of my bosom one drop of the happiness of that being which creates all things in itself and through itself.

The same wish, expressed in almost the same words, occurs in *Faust*. Faust sees the bird flying high over his head and wishes that he himself had wings. Even the crane re-occurs:

Wenn über schroffen Fichtenhöhen  
Der Adler ausgebreitet schwebt,  
Und über Flächen, über Seen  
Der Kranich nach der Heimath strebt.

It is likewise during the walk on Easter evening that Faust, seeing the light of the setting sun in the windows, which causes them to shine as if filled with fire, longs for wings so that he might follow the sun in its course:

O dass kein Flügel mich vom Boden hebt  
Ihr nach und immer nach zu streben!

He would live in eternal light and clarity, with the night behind him and the day before him, and drink from the never-failing fountain of life, just as Werther would have done:

Doch scheint die Göttin endlich wegzusinken;  
Allein der neue Trieb erwacht,  
Ich eile fort, ihr ew'ges Licht zu trinken  
Vor mir den Tag und hinter mir die Nacht . . .  
Ach zu des Geistes Flügeln wird so bald  
Kein körperlicher Flügel sich gesellen.

Doch ist es jedem eingeboren,  
Dass sein Gefühl hinaus und vorwärts dringt,  
Wenn über uns im Raum verloren  
Ihr schmetternd Lied die Lerche singt.

These verses from *Faust* belong to the edition from the year 1806, and could hardly have been written much earlier, since Goethe used for the next scene in which Faust appears a book by Pfister on mediaeval sorcery. We know as a fact that he borrowed this book from the Weimar library in 1801. We see, accordingly, that in Werther's love for nature and in his visionary attitude toward it there is an element of Goethe's own vigorous and wholesome character, an element that was preserved in his works a full generation after this period.

Goethe has made Werther's impressions of nature conform to his own momentary feelings; and he has done this with uncommon delicacy. Suffering from an unhappy love affair, he sees (August 18) in nature only the powers of destruction; in heaven and earth he sees only "an eternally swallowing up and eternally ruminating monster." But he is healthy for all that.

Deep down in his soul Werther is not an un-

manly youth; and he is above all not a whimperer. The fact is, Goethe had to have a tragic end, for the strong passion which had thus far prevailed would lose its poetic interest if the conclusion were primarily idyllic. This being the case he took up with a new model at the very last, and introduced a few confusing facts from the world of reality, such as Werther's reading Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, one of the clearest, most rational dramas in existence. In a letter to Herder Goethe himself criticises it as being "only thought."

He accommodated everything to this tragic close: He had the bright summer mood of the first part supplanted by the melancholy of autumn in the second; he dropped Homer and Homer's wholesome views of nature and took up Ossian. Homer is a distinct force in the first part. When Werther cooks his own green peas in the public kitchen at Wahlheim, his mind reverts at once to Penelope's haughty wooers who roasted their own oxen. Now the hazy, restless Ossianic pictures, which corresponded to the increasing morbidity, uncertainty, and lyrical passion, gradually gain control of the theme, until Ossian's songs—which Goethe had translated for Friederike, and which are interpolated just before the final decision—prepare the way for death and downfall.

The degree in which he estimated Ossian at this period of his life is revealed by the beautiful passage in which Werther expresses his indignation at the individual who asks him whether he likes Lotte. Like her? One might as well ask him whether he likes Ossian.

## II

There is no one definite taste in *Werthers Leiden*. The natural and fascinating alternate with the super-sentimental and exaggerated; ingenious similes and perspicacious soul studies vie with an extravagance which could not help but seem antiquated even during Goethe's own life; indeed it made this very impression on him himself. It is fortunate that in a later edition he contented himself, on the whole, with some addenda that greatly enrich, and did not undertake another of his confusing revisions.

One quite infelicitous revision is this one of July 16: "How I adore myself since she loves me!" It corresponds to the equally unfortunate phrases that introduce the book in the editor's assurance to the readers: "You cannot help but give his mind and his character your *admiration* and your love." This contains one redundant word.

The hymn to Klopstock of June 16 is also antiquated. Lotte has mentioned his name. Werther reverts, in thought, to Klopstock, and then exclaims: "Noble man! Would that you could have seen your idolization in this look and would that I were never again to hear your desecrated name!" The meaning is: "I hope that I shall never again hear your name desecrated." It was only a few more years until Goethe, immediately after his arrival in Weimar, was to have Klopstock placed over him as a moralist, and to see himself obliged to reject him and his ideals. And from that day on he was forced to tolerate the enmity of the author of *Der Messias*. But who in our day can study Klopstock's vulgar and con-

ceited face, who can read his works without being bewildered at the attention he received while living? It all betrays, as nothing else, the fact that the German people were standing at that time on a very low artistic and spiritual level. I do not believe that I underestimate Klopstock's services to the German language, and the part he played in the national awakening of the German people. Nor do I undervalue a few of his odes in which—*Der Eislauf*, for example—there is real nature sense, though nature *tone* they know not. But that his main work, *Der Messias*, could so inspire—what a testimony to the low degree of development in Germany long after the middle of the eighteenth century, after the Encyclopaedists, after Voltaire! For non-Germans, and certainly for many Germans, it is now impossible to read, to say nothing of enjoying, *Der Messias*. It would be preferable to read Indian religious poetry from the gray days of old. It is just as full of unction and just as empty. And the incredible verses that are supposed to be hexameters! The fourth of *Der Messias* limps as follows:

Leidend getötet und verherrlicht, wieder erhöht hat.

It would be interesting to know where Klopstock fancied the accents should fall. Or take this verse:

Weihe sie, Geist Schöpfer, vor dem ich hier still anbete.

The legion of false accents corresponds to the falsehood and fatuousness of the ideas. In such Goethe took delight in the days of his poetic adolescence.

There is still another of the heroes of Goethe's

youth—whom we are soon to see abandoned, even persecuted as a fraud—that received honorable mention in *Werther*: Lavater. The clergyman's wife, as is announced in the memorandum of September 15, 1772, who has the nut trees cut down, is characterized by the fact that she shrugged her shoulders at Lavater's fanatic hobbies—just as Goethe himself did not many years later.

In other places *Werther* represents, to be sure, a point of view which the author of the book was soon to discard, though a point of view that was justified for a quite different reason: the proclaiming of artistic naturalism as a matter of principle. By making an exact copy of nature, *Werther* has produced a sketch which is entirely successful, and which seems to interest him. This strengthens him in his determination to hold fast to nature alone in the future; for it is infinitely rich; it alone creates the great artists. Nature is here contrasted with the rules and not, as later in Goethe's life, with the ideals. Quite in the spirit of *Sturm und Drang* he writes: "One can say about as much to the advantage of the rules as one can say to the advantage of established bourgeois society." It does not yet occur to Goethe that it is not so much fidelity to rules that contradicts an imitation of nature. We read, to be sure, later on in his own works:

Nachahmung der Natur  
—der schönen—  
Ich ging auch wohl auf dieser Spur;  
Gewöhnen  
Möcht' ich wohl nach und nach den Sinn,  
mich zu vergnügen.  
Allein sobald ich mündig bin—  
Es sind's die Griechen.

The poet who, in course of time, was to relegate all strong feelings to their proper limit, so much so that in the eyes of many he appeared secretive, dry and unimaginative, takes not the slightest offense at the manifestation of any type of emotional outburst in Werther. When Lotte dotes on her little sister, who is terrified by Werther's kiss and fears lest she may grow a beard because of it, Werther almost has to do violence to himself in order to keep from falling down and adoring her. Lotte takes the child to the well and washes the kiss off. Werther exclaims with undisciplined sentimentality:

I never attended a christening with greater reverence. When Lotte returned, I would have liked to throw myself down before her as I would before a Prophet of old who had atoned for the sins of an entire people.

Had Goethe not had the poor taste to prefer, at this period of his life, the Swiss Rousseau to native French writers, he would have avoided such an outbreak.

Flaws of this kind, however, are rare; they vanish in the enraptured portrayal of Werther's infatuation. How dainty is the description of his uncertainty as to whether Lotte was trying to see him when she leaned her head out of the carriage as they drove away! And equally charming is the confession that he would gladly have kissed the boy who brought him a note from her simply because this boy had recently seen her. Beautiful and apt is also the comparison (July 26) in which he says he is drawn to her as the ships are drawn to the magnetic mountain in the fairy tale. The nails fly to the

peaks and the poor wretches are shipwrecked amid falling boards and floating planks.

By means of a number of delicate touches that are eventually blended into a unified whole, the psychology of Werther is delineated with force and grace. Lotte upbraids him, for example, for his "all too passionate participation in everything." We have also a significant touch when (August 12) Albert's nature is described as being the antipodes of Werther's. The occasion of this remark—in a fine and careful preparation for the close of the novel—is Albert's well-founded objection to Werther's playing with his pistols, even when they are not supposed to be loaded, and Albert's commitments on the foolish element in suicide. It is in this connection that Werther makes use of the superbly phrased sentence that shows us the real Albert: "*Nun weisst du, dass ich den Menschen sehr lieb habe bis auf seine Zwar.*" It is to be assumed as a matter of fact, says Werther, that there are exceptions to all generalities. But so would-be wise is Albert, that when he feels that he has made an over-hasty remark, or has said something that is too general or only half true, he delimits it and verifies it beyond recognition. A long conversation is spun out during which Werther first defends the actions undertaken in passion, and then, when suicide is touched upon, contends that there are certain degrees of torture which can no longer be endured and which consequently justify self-annihilation.

The figure of Lotte is introduced in a naïve and natural, and in the most original, way for the heroine of a love story. When Werther sees her for the first time she is surrounded by six children between

two and eleven years old. Though beautifully dressed for the ball, in a white gown with pink scarf, she is holding a huge piece of rye bread in her hand and cutting for each of her small brothers and sisters a slice dietetically adapted to the age and appetite of the recipient in question.

Though extremely young, she is maternal and domestic; the children love her and obey her. The two oldest boys, having received permission to run along behind the carriage for a short distance, kiss her hand tenderly and cordially on leaving her.

Immediately after this we see her whirling about in the waltz with address and charm. She is beautiful, good, modest, wholesome, and without affectation.

The second part of the novel has a wholly different character from the first. The first part is plastic and living, the second is psychopathic. We hear precious little about Charlotte. It is well known that Goethe no longer uses himself as a model; he has substituted the other. It is the situation and the incidents in the life of young Jerusalem that are here portrayed. Werther is now interested more or less in another woman, who, according to the intolerable custom of that time, is referred to as Fräulein von B.

The new motive to Werther's former self-abandonment, the prejudice namely against which he as a private citizen has to fight and the humiliation to which he is exposed, are now introduced. The arrogance of the nobility is attacked and ridiculed, but from an essentially conservative turn of mind: Class differences are necessary; Werther does not forget what advantages they have brought to him himself.

And now, after having been ejected from the Count's house on that afternoon because he, as an ordinary citizen, is not tolerated in the society of the nobility, the idea of suicide arises in his mind for the first time. "Ah, hundreds of times have I seized a knife in order to give air to my agonized heart. It is said of thorough-bred horses that, after they have been heated up and driven about in a fearful manner, they bite open a vein in order thereby to get air."

On the twenty-fourth of March Werther asks for his release as attaché of the legation. His mother had hoped to see him as a *Geheimrat* and *Hofmann* —a position which Goethe in actuality secured not much later.

A prince, who is without knowledge of men and talks only of what he has heard and read, takes an interest in Werther. This man places a higher value on Werther's reason and ability than on his heart, which—in accord with the spirit of that age—is his "sole pride." The melancholy youth thinks of going to war; he gives up the idea however when a general under whom he wished to serve shows him that this wish is more a matter of caprice than passion. In the beginning of July he changes his place of abode; he wants to visit a neighborhood apparently in order to study some mines, in actuality to be nearer to Lotte.

On the twenty-sixth of October he is again, and all of a sudden, near her. When he returned we are not told. In marked contrast to the circumstantiality with which everything is related, we have here not a word on the meeting at the end of a year. But Werther feels quite at home in her town; he

seems to be welcome; indeed he cannot be imagined anywhere else. And the question arises in his mind, or rather in his soul: Suppose I went away, would they miss me, and if so, how long? By the fifth of November he has already lost his spirit; he has lost what he exaltedly calls "the sacred, inspiring power with which he created worlds about him."

The nearer we approach the end the more emphasis is laid on Werther's peculiarity as a being of nature and his estrangement from Christianity: "Has not the Son of God Himself said that they should be around Him whom the Father has given Him? But if I am not given to Him?" Werther wishes to be dissolved in nature. He would gladly renounce his human character in order, with the storm, to tear the skies asunder and move the waters.

The unhappy love affair and the social slight are taken up together. Werther's jealousy grows. Albert feels dissatisfied with the youth's advances to his wife. He is out of humor. The relation between the consorts is growing darker and darker. Werther feels moreover that his honor has been irreparably wounded through the social jilt he suffered. At the same time Charlotte is forced to ask him not to come to the house again for three days.

Suicidal instincts arise in his lacerated soul. He dreams of murdering her husband, her, himself. As to his criminal intentions the reader is skeptical. It is not set forth in a sufficiently convincing way. Then come, as a mood-awakener, the Ossianic poems. As an insertion they are too long. These are followed by the last meeting. For the first time in his life Werther feels that Charlotte loves him.

In the final letter, written in the spirit of that age, we read of *milleniums* (as in *Götz*, *Clavigo*, *Faust*) : "Lotte, milleniums can never efface these impressions." And finally the beautiful note: "Nature, thy son, thy friend, thy lover draws near—near to the infinite end!"

### III

Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloïse* had appeared in 1761. This is the book without which Goethe could not have written his *Leiden des jungen Werthers* thirteen years later. Rousseau's hero, Saint-Preux, changed his clothes, donned the famous costume, the blue coat and yellow vest which Werther wears, and which Goethe himself had worn in Wetzlar. *La nouvelle Héloïse* had enraptured France, indeed the whole of Europe. The story of Werther's passionate and unhappy love affair likewise received its significance from the fact that it did more than portray the casual passion and incidental misfortune of a single individual: It treated the theme in such a way that the passions, yearnings, and torments of an entire age found their expression therein.

The age saw itself visualized in this book. *Werther* depicted the right and the wrong of the full heart in its relation to workaday rules, its striving after infinity, its impulse to freedom, that freedom which reacts to the dividing lines of human society as it would to the bleak walls of a prison. In the course of a few months, the author of *Werther* became the most famous personality in German literature. Young men sympathized, first

in Germany and later in many other countries, with *Werther*: they dressed and yearned and felt just as did he. Young women wanted to be loved just as Lotte had been loved.

As early as 1777, the book had been imitated by Pastor Miller in his *Sigwart, eine Klostergeschichte*, a creation on which there was showered an inordinate measure of the praise that is born of fashion. *Götz von Berlichingen* had been a victory in Germany; *Werther* encompassed the earth. Three French translations appeared in 1776-77. The English translations began to appear in 1779. And as late as twenty-five years after its publication, *Werther* inspired Ugo Foscolo in Italy to write his *Jacopo Ortis*. Fully thirty years later it moved Charles Nodier in France to write his novel entitled *Le Peintre de Strasbourg*. And as early as 1779, scarcely five years after its original publication, *Werther* was so famous that a certain Herr von Leonardia of Glückstadt found, in the Captain's cabin of a merchant ship, several Chinese paintings which portrayed *Werther's* sufferings. This explains Goethe's statement in the Venetian epigramme,

Doch, was fördert es mich, dass sogar auch der Chinese  
Malet mit ängstlicher Hand Werthern und Lotten auf  
Glas!

Still less satisfaction could the author of *Werther* derive from the fact that in a little country like Denmark it completely captivated Rahbek,<sup>9</sup> was imitated

<sup>9</sup> Knud Lyhne Rahbek, born at Copenhagen in 1760, died there in 1830. Even as a student he showed marked enthusiasm for the theatre, and supported it through the various magazines he established. He was one of the most productive and popular writers

by Ingemann<sup>10</sup> in his *Varners Vandringer*, and by Sibbern<sup>11</sup> in his *Gabrielis*. One thing is certain: the fame of the book became universal. Napoleon took it with him on his campaign to Egypt in 1798, read it seven times, and studied it so carefully that he could discuss a point in its composition during his conversation with the author in 1808. Chodowiecki and Crusius illustrated the work. Indeed even at public markets in Germany *Werther* was shown painted on cloth or canvas.

By way of petty retaliation, however, the book aroused the embitterment of the older generation and of the authorities. In Leipzig the sale of *Werther* was forbidden on penalty of a fine of one hundred dollars. Senior Pastor Götze, noted or of his day, casting off lyrics apparently without difficulty—and sometimes without inspiration—at the same time that he dedicated his energy to the popularization of Danish literature. His wife, Kamma Rahbek, born Heger, was Adam Oehlenschläger's sister-in-law. Her most noted work was the founding of "Bakkehuset," near Copenhagen, where she opened and presided over a literary salon such as Denmark had not known up to that time, and has not known since. For the Rahbeks then to take up with *Werther* meant that it would be known to literary Denmark as a whole. Brandes himself has written a captivating monograph on Kamma Rahbek.

—TRANSLATOR.

<sup>10</sup> Bernhard Severin Ingemann (1789-1862) was the Walter Scott of Denmark. His "Varner" was written in 1813 when he was still enveloped in the hysterical romanticism that was a part of his youthful nature and part of his country at that time. He wrote a series of novels portraying the life and history of Denmark in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Danes are familiar with him as the author of a cycle of patriotic poems entitled "Holger Danske."

—TRANSLATOR.

<sup>11</sup> Frederik Christian Sibbern (1785-1872) wrote his "Letters of Gabrielis" in 1826. It reached the fifth edition in 1893. He traveled extensively in Germany, where he came under the influence of Schelling. Though he never built up a philosophic system of his own he did much to direct the thought of his time. His most important work is "The Spiritual Nature and Being of Man" (1819-1828).

—TRANSLATOR.

notorious because of his feud with Lessing, wrote in 1775 his *Kurzgefasste aber notwendige Erinnerungen* against *Werther* and, what is still more remarkable, Götze and Lessing agreed for once in a matter of literary judgment. Lessing found *Werther* flaccid and immoral since its method of reasoning was not Grecian. He wished in the place of the suicide a cynical ending, just as cynical as possible, an ending that would prove that *Werther* was capable of being cured of his unhappy and excessive infatuation.

In Denmark Bishop Balle<sup>12</sup> brought it about that the work was placed on the index by the theological faculty as a book which makes religion ridiculous and vice attractive. In Milan the resident bishop bought up an entire edition of the Italian translation and had it destroyed. Viennese critics hoped that little by little people would reject Goethe inspiration and revert to common sense. Nicolai, who wrote the wretched parody entitled *Die Freuden des jungen Werther*, had the chagrin, as he himself relates in his *Beschreibung einer Reise durch Deutschland und die Schweiz*, 1781, of seeing in Vienna, not simply a grand tragic ballet, in three acts, called *Der junge Werther*, but of attending fireworks, *Wird man es glauben: ein Feuerwerk?* known as *Werthers Zusammenkunft mit Lotte in Elysium*. This ingenious creation was divided into two parts, front fireworks and decorations. The

<sup>12</sup> Bishop Nicolaj Edinger Balle (1744-1816) took a middle ground between orthodoxy and rationalism. In 1791 he published a catechism that was long considered an authority. From 1793 on he held a series of "Bible evenings" in one of the Copenhagen churches. His motto was: "The Bible is its own defense."

former was in five sections, depicting Werther's happy days, his union with Lotte despite the separation, and his meeting with Lotte at her final resting place. The decorations portrayed Werther and Lotte during their sojourn in the Elysian fields. There was then no lack of those elements that make for popularity and from which universal favor is wont to proceed.

## CHAPTER XI

### GOETHE AND BEAUMARCHAIS; *Clavigo*

THE leading character in *Clavigo*, Goethe's next more pretentious work, is far more unmanly even than *Werther*. The genesis of this play is as follows: In the social circle to which Goethe belonged after his return from Wetzlar, a game known as playing-at-getting-married had come into vogue. By the casting of lots, the young ladies and gentlemen were paired off and the individual couples were to consider themselves, for eight days in succession, as summer married people. This simply meant, it seems, that during this period the young gentleman in question was to regard himself as the cavalier of the young lady in question. It came to pass in the spring of 1774 that Goethe was united three times in succession to the beautiful, sixteen-year-old Anna Sibylla Münch—the girl of all young girls in Frankfurt to whom his mother would have most liked to see him married. There is no doubt but that a good deal of the marriage game took place between Goethe and the young girls of the circle. Here are two sisters, Susanne Magdalene Münch and Anna Sibylla, between whom he seems to have divided his heart about equally. Then there are the three Gerock sisters, and we have Kestner's description of an accidental meeting between Goethe and the one sister Antoinette. Her face beamed at the sight;

she greeted him on the promenade with an impetuous embrace and a kiss—that is fourteen days after the disconsolate departure in the letter to Lotte, preserved word for word in *Werther*.

Goethe says that after his return from Strassburg he was constantly loved in Frankfort by a fine, amiable woman. Not until after her death did he learn of this mysterious and divine love in a way that could not help but move him. Was it Antoinette Gerock—and is she one model for Mignon?

At the weekly meetings Goethe had read aloud from Beaumarchais, especially from his defense entitled: *Quatrième Mémoire à consulter, etc. Contre M. Goetzmann, accusé de subornation et de faux; Madame Goetzmann et le Sieur Bertrand, accusés; les Sieurs Marin, gazetiers; Darnaud Baculard, Conseiller d'ambassade, et consorts.*

I do not believe that a club of young men and young women, all of them very young, would in our day choose for reading aloud such an original and such an interesting polemical pamphlet in a foreign language, the plea in a lawsuit from a man who was not yet famous, who was as yet the author of neither *The Barber of Seville* nor *Figaro*. Originality in the choice of reading matter has become rare indeed. But by way of explaining the originality in this case we must concede that Goethe belonged to this circle.

When the reading was finished, Anna Sibylla said to him: "If I were now your sweetheart and not your wife, I would encourage you to transform this *mémoire* into a drama."

The result was remarkable; this monograph had already had an enriching effect on Goethe's mind;

before the week was over the drama was finished. The achievement was of itself not great; many a dramatic author has worked just as rapidly, and the work is, to be sure, not of first rank. But it is dramatic to a high degree, more dramatic than anything else Goethe ever wrote. This was owing to the breath of Beaumarchais there is in it. Beaumarchais's plea contains incidentally (on the occasion of an anonymous, calumniating letter) an account of his journey to Spain in 1764; it tells how the audacious, self-confident, mentally superior adventurer, supplied with the very best of recommendations, undertook a journey beyond the Pyrenees in order to have justice done to his sister and against the Spanish writer who had brought her into public disgrace by his conduct toward her. In Beaumarchais's account his sister has of course all the right on her side; he himself is a knight without fear and without reproach. Clavigo, an absolutely low-minded individual whose business it is to deceive him, changes his place of abode time and again in order to deceive him, and finally effects an order of arrest against him, but is caught up by Spanish justice and discharged from his office and his untenable position.

Goethe takes up Beaumarchais's sketch step by step and places it in the light in which he places himself, though he gives a different explanation of Clavigo's action and has him, at last, cause the young girl's death while he penitently retires under the influence of a worldly wise but cold-hearted friend. Goethe has incarnated himself absolutely in Clavigo's conduct toward Marie Beaumarchais. It is his own conduct toward Friederike Brion.

The point of departure from which Goethe proceeds in *Clavigo* is the second act. With the exception of the first page and a half, Goethe has taken the entire act, word for word, from Beaumarchais. He has not merely copied the speeches, but also the stage directions (such as "he becomes more attentive," "changes his expression," "loses every single cheerful expression," "moves about on his chair in the greatest confusion") are taken literally from Beaumarchais's account.

It is in this crucial act that Beaumarchais, during his unexpected visit to the famous author and keeper of the imperial records, forces him, in the presence of his entire body of servants, to draw up a written statement, one that is intended for publication, in which he confesses that he has debased, without the shadow of right or reason, an irreproachable girl, and begs her forgiveness.

On the stage this scene is tremendously effective; but as everyone who has seen it knows, it is excessively painful. This is particularly true of the fact that Clavigo allows himself to be coerced into calling in his servants and signing a statement, in their presence, which seals his own degradation and stamps his conduct as dishonorable. The spectator rebels at the very thought; that is no real man who will conduct himself in such a fashion. Moreover, one is repelled by the lack of refinement on the part of Goethe which persuaded him to select as a hero an individual who finds himself in this predicament. In the pride of the first moment, Goethe wrote to F. H. Jacobi:

That Beaumarchais's *mémoires de cet avanturier françois* delighted me, and awakened the romantic strength of youth

in me, that his character and his deed were amalgamated with points of my own character and with deeds of my own, and thus Clavigo became my own—all this is my good fortune, and I challenge the most critical knife to separate the passages that have been merely translated from the whole without mutilating it, without inflicting on the structure, and not merely on the story, a mortal wound.

He is of course quite right in insisting that the act could not be cut out or separated; but he should not have challenged the most critical knife, for it is, when in good condition, a very sharp instrument. He who wielded it could, for example, draw attention to the fact that Goethe, by crudely appropriating the entire act without modification, has placed Clavigo, to whom he does not deny his respect, in a far worse light than Beaumarchais does, who profoundly despises him.

The explanation offered by Goethe is precisely the same as that offered by Beaumarchais. He has simply omitted the date, May 19, 1764, from the explanation. But let us not overlook the fact that in Beaumarchais, the servants understand not one word of all that is said in the room.

It is the same in the original as in Goethe's work: "You have disgraced in cold blood an honorable girl, because you thought that she was here in a strange country without assistance and without avengers. That is the action of a scoundrel and a wretch. And therefore you must now declare, by your own hand and voluntarily, that you are a detestable person, and you must make this statement in the presence of your servants who do not understand us, because we speak French (*qui ne nous entendront pas parce que nous parlons Français*)."  
These words Goethe

omitted, and he had to omit them, because his characters spoke German, and in the drama it was impossible for him to make a distinction between the scenes in which this German stood for French and those in which it stood for Spanish. But he forgot that he thereby gave Clavigo a stigma which he was not later in position to eradicate.

Goethe has also in another way, by copying his text so uncritically, debased his hero where he wished to elevate him. In the drama as a whole the union between Clavigo and Marie is conceived after the fashion of the Germanic peoples. Marriage should only confirm a union between hearts. In Beaumarchais marriage is conceived after the fashion of the Romance peoples, as a secular and practical institution. Clavigo as a Spaniard has regarded it in this latter light. It is not therefore ridiculous from his point of view when he says to Beaumarchais who has scolded him: "Vanity has led me astray. I feared that I would ruin my chances of a distinguished future by this marriage. Had I known that she had such a brother, she would not have been in my eyes an insignificant, foreign woman. I would have hoped for the greatest advantages from this marriage." By a more careful elaboration Goethe could have given Clavigo's character greater dignity and thereby greater interest.

Carlos, the other leading character in the drama, is purely fictitious. In him we see, as it were, the first attempt at Mephistopheles, in whom, as is known, there is a blending of multifarious elements. Mephistopheles is the shrewd servant, his master's confidant and matchmaker; there is in him something of the harlequin and something of the clown;

but there is also in his supercilious intellect, which scorns all emotion and leads everything back to sensual reality, something of the so-called satanic.

In Carlos we have as yet only this devil's sharp and heartless intellect united with a passionate interest for his friend whom he admires and whom he wishes to liberate through his mockery. Now and then there is a sort of crayon sketch of a motif that reappears in *Faust*. When Carlos, for example, portrays Clavigo, where a number of young women appeal to him, either personally or in writing in order through him to make the acquaintance of Clavigo, Carlos says:

"How many a young duenna came into my hands on this occasion!"

This is an anticipation of the scene in which Mephistopheles has the duenna on his neck while Faust busies himself with the young virgin.

Merck, the model, had a Mephistopheles figure. He was tall and gaunt, had a pointed nose and a tiger-like look in light blue eyes. At this time he was army paymaster (*Kriegszahlmeister*) in Darmstadt. As has been indicated above, he had a keen intellect, poetic talent, good taste, was equally at home in literature, art, and natural sciences, had done a great deal of work along all of these lines, had written scientific treatises on the animals of the prehistoric world, satires, fables, novelettes, and critical reviews. He impressed his contemporaries, however, especially by his person. In this age of hazy, unclear feelings, he had a critical judgment that saw through all weaknesses and defects; and he was chemically free of good nature. This latter characteristic arose in part from the fact that

he became more and more embittered and distempered as time went on, first because his marriage turned out unhappily, and secondly because of some unsuccessful business enterprises that brought him to the brink of ruin. A few years later, Goethe persuaded his Duke to come to his financial assistance by going on his bond for four thousand guilders. Merck however fell a prey to melancholy and fancied that his numerous speculations were going to bankrupt him, though his business affairs were after all not in such poor condition. He shot himself in 1791.

For Goethe Merck always cherished the most cordial affection. One time, after having been separated from him for quite a while, he chanced to see Necker's medallion of Goethe. He at once broke out in tears of joy, and had a duplicate made so that he could use this head as a seal.

One should read attentively the conversations between Carlos and Clavigo in the first and fourth acts of the drama, where he persuades his friend to break with the little girl who is holding him back and dragging him down:

*Carlos* (Act I): And get married! Get married just at the time that life is really beginning to amount to something! Settle down to a domestic existence, bind one's self before half of the journey has been completed, before half of the conquests have been made! . . . Be calm! She is not the first girl to have been deserted, and to have found consolation. If I were to advise you, there is the young widow across the way. . . .

*Carlos* (Act IV): I have borne your fate in my heart as though it were my own. You are my only friend; all other men are intolerable to me, and you are beginning to become so.

*Clavigo*: I beg you to calm yourself.

*Carlos*: Burn down one's house on which he has worked for ten years, and then send him a father confessor to preach him a sermon on Christian patience!

*Clavigo*: I confess to you that I was frightened on seeing Marie again! How disfigured, how pale, how consumed! And that is my fault, my treachery!

*Carlos*: Nonsense! Whims! She was consumptive even while your affair with her was still in full bloom. But you lovers simply have no eyes, no noses. (The realism of the expressions is pronounced enough!) Clavigo, it is a disgrace! Thus to forget everything, everything, a sick woman who will bequeath her pestilence to your offspring, so that your children and grandchildren, on reaching a certain age, will politely go out like so many beggars' lamps.

If Carlos is gruff and audacious, Clavigo in his remorse and contrition is too pitiable to be of interest. To Beaumarchais he calls himself "a wretch who is not worthy to behold the light of day." And to his friend he gives this explanation of his conduct: "Carlos, I am a very small person." This is, unfortunately, the painful truth. It is shown most clearly when he accepts Carlos's low-minded suggestion of having Beaumarchais arrested and criminally indicted for having come to Madrid in secret, for having introduced himself under a false name, for having thrown him off his guard by kind words, and for having forced a statement from him, only later to go out and spread the same statement broadcast.

If we compare, moreover, the decisive conversation between Carlos and Clavigo with the similar scene in Octave Feuillet's *Dalila* between Carnioli and Roswein, we will see that the situations are precisely alike. The shrewd friend and lover of art wants to prevent the artist from entering into a marriage which he may later regret. The various

speeches in Feuillet's work teem with humorous touches: Don't you know, you triple idiot, that marriage is one of these wild and merciless laws of nature as a result of which the individual is consumed in his attempt to preserve the human race! I forbid you to put yourself under this dishonorable extinguisher.—You will stop like a locomotive that has jumped the track and whose own steam, try as it may, cannot budge it from the place.—You will have your wings clipped; you will turn sick in the limbs which you no longer have . . . and this for the sake of such a little girl who, like a Dutch woman, will plant tulips in your heart.

Goethe's Carlos is less figurative, stays closer to the earth, but makes a stronger impression. He is more fascinating than the leading character Clavigo, even more so than Goethe's Beaumarchais. How infinitely more shrewd and droll than Goethe's good fellow was the real Beaumarchais, especially as he became in time, surrounded by inner contrasts, a bold idealist and a bold man of business, as rich in plans as he was in wisdom. He has in him the instinct of the age, which brings it about that he inaugurates the Revolution with his *Figaro*. His *Barber of Seville*, published the same year as *Clavigo*, is significant for a reason other than the one that makes Goethe's drama significant.

Goethe has handled the names in the drama with considerable freedom. The unabbreviated name of the leading character was José Clavijo y Fajardo, and the name of the young woman to whom he was engaged was Louise (not Marie) Caron (not de Beaumarchais, since the title of nobility which her brother had bought did not extend to her).

The style is that of Goethe's youth; it is the style which Schiller inherited from him long after he himself had abandoned it. Beaumarchais says:

O how I feel the thirsting vengeance in my bosom! O how the magnificent feeling, the yearning after his blood snatches me from a mood of dull indecision! Vengeance! Annihilation! O how well I feel! How everything in me urges me to lay hold of him, to destroy him!

No rapier! No pistol! I will strangle him with these very hands, and then all the joy will be mine! The feeling that I have murdered him will be mine!

Conspicuous in this drama, as we have already noticed, is the marked influence of *Hamlet*. Here too the brother appears as the avenger of the deserted girl. In the scene of the burial—in both dramas—there is a conflict between the lover and the brother. And just as if copied from Hamlet's admonition to be careful on the ground that there was something dangerous in him, Clavigo exclaims: "Stop! Don't make me mad! The unhappy are dangerous." He is pierced by Beaumarchais's rapier, and in his dying hour permits, indeed, causes his magnanimity to flow on unimpeded.

It is right curious that Beaumarchais himself had had a drama, entitled *Eugénie*, performed at the Théâtre Français as early as 1767, in which he made use of his sister's biography, especially with regard to the motif of the brother who espouses the cause of the deceived and deserted girl. But he has treated the theme with such infinite discretion that no one would be apt to suspect that it is his own family history that is being dramatized. The action is transferred to England. The seducer is one Count of Clarendon, and the young girl is a daughter of

one Baron Hartley. With this theme as a basis, he constructed a play of intrigue in which the threads are interwoven with remarkable skill. The Count has beguiled his unsuspecting fiancée into a marriage that is wholly invalid, since he has his intendant disguise himself as a priest, and the members of his household act as witnesses.

While the young woman under the guise of a lady of degree is expecting her child, she learns that the Count, who has just visited her and conducted himself as her devoted husband, is planning to enter on the following day into a marriage with a rich and distinguished young girl. The brother had committed a breach of discipline as an officer as a result of which he is leading a threatened existence. He is attacked by would-be assassins, but is immediately rescued by the unexpected assistance of Clarendon whom he does not even know. Suddenly he learns of the deception his rescuer has practiced on his sister. He protects him at first, in order to repay him for what he has done, and then appears in the rôle of an avenger. In this way Clarendon comes to regret his conduct, begs forgiveness, gives up the idea of his financially advantageous marriage and pleads for the hand of the young woman. There is a goodly measure of dignity in the way in which the reconciliation is effected.

## CHAPTER XII

### LAVATER AND BASEDOW—THE JACOBI BROTHERS —FRITZ JACOBI; *Allwill, Woldemar*

DURING his stay in Frankfort from 1773 to 1775, Goethe, already famous, made the acquaintance of many sorts of people. He was sought after on the one hand by younger men interested in literature and ever ready to avail themselves without scruple or thought for the consequences of any plans or ideas he might reveal in the course of his conversations. One of these was H. L. Wagner to whom he had uncautiously read the plan of his *Faust*, in 1774. In 1776, fourteen years before Goethe published the *Fragment* with the Gretchen tragedy, Wagner usurped the idea for his *Kindesmörderin*. Lacking moral balance as he did, he revised it three years later and gave it a happy ending. On the other hand, he was sought after by such a widely known writer as Klopstock. Having learned of Klopstock's interest in his works, he wrote (May 28, 1774) to him in filial reverence: "Should I not address myself to that individual while still living to whose grave I would gladly make a pilgrimage?" As Klopstock appeared in Frankfort he was small, well developed, with a measured but supple bearing. He gave the impression of a diplomat who represents, not a prince, but higher powers; he was the representative of religion, morals, and political free-

dom. He did not like to discuss literature: he dwelt by preference in detail on skating and the breaking-in of horses. He occupied at that time a place in German literature such as first Grundtvig<sup>18</sup> and then Björnson held in the North. In contrast, however, to the patriarch he was a man of the world. That even his external appearance seemed to appeal to young Wolfgang is relatively obvious from his lines on Klopstock in Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*:

This bland and receding forehead signifies pure human reason; the space above the eyes signifies originality and finesse; the nose is that of an observer. In the mouth there is amiability, precision and, in its connection with the chin, certainty, sureness. Over the entire face hover indescribable peace, purity and temperance.

Goethe was soon to perceive how strongly Klopstock felt that he was the moral guardian of the youth of his day; and that so far as the aforesaid temperance was concerned, the virtue was a bit tenuous.

Lavater also came to Frankfort to make the acquaintance of his youthful admirer. He too was a prophet who stood on a confidential footing with

<sup>18</sup> Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872) was one of the most influential writers Denmark has produced. Reared in the spirit of the eighteenth century, he began the nineteenth as a pagan. Intimately associated with Steffens and Oehlenschläger, he studied and wrote on Shakespeare, Goethe, the Eddas, Northern Mythology and—after his “conversion”—religion. He said of himself: “I am half poet, half book-worm.” He was always in some sort of contest. He was a prophet, poet, preacher, politician, translator, critic and man. Björnson derived a great deal of inspiration from his teachings. The Danes, indeed all Scandinavians, remember him possibly best for his interest in and establishment of the “high-schools.” The first was begun at Rödding in 1843. There are now about 80, attended annually by about 9,000 pupils.

the Lord, and who was given to casting his gaze forward into eternity.

Johann Caspar Lavater was a theologian; he was one of those priestly persons who, supported by vague enthusiasm and seeming animation from on high, exercise a tremendous influence on women and children. In him there was a mixture of inspiration and charlatanism, such as the founders of sects are so apt to have. It was years before Goethe saw through him; and it was his belated enlightenment that made Goethe, in the end, such an unmerciful critic of the man whom he had studied with an excess of zeal.

Lavater's chief interest and obsession at that time was physiognomics, an exceedingly unclear and precarious science for which, however, it was not difficult to gain the sympathy of a young artist to whose articles of faith this one quite naturally had to belong, the one on which all portraiture depends: that the external is the internal, that the physical is the expression and mirror of the soul. Goethe allowed himself to be enlisted as a collaborator on Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*. E. v. d. Hellen has succeeded in separating the part written by Goethe from the rest. It is not of great compass though it has its interest for later generations.

Goethe protests against the mockery and indifference of his contemporaries with regard to physiognomics, and though he himself must have felt how far it came from being an exact science it was nevertheless precious to him as the key to knowledge pertaining to the human heart. The heart was at that time everything in the literary world. The affairs of the heart were also the affairs of the head

for the youth of that day. The natural scientist in him took a lively interest in the form and structure of the skull. He describes the shape of one head after another. And when one sees how he dwells with equal interest on the physiognomy of animals and that of men, when one reads his description of wolves, bears, tigers, lions, cats, otters, beavers, hedgehogs and so on, which interest him almost as much as the descriptions of the heads of Cæsar, Brutus, Tiberius and so on, one understands that, when he discovers the intermaxillary bone he will also be the man to discover the hitherto unknown congruity between the human skeleton and the skeleton of animals. Several of the individuals whom he describes later came to stand in a spiritual relation to him, Rameau and Newton among others. He describes Newton with an admiration that stands out in sharp contrast to the aversion he eventually came to feel toward him.

Interesting in the next place are the lines he wrote on a portrait of Charlotte von Stein: "It would be a magnificent spectacle to see how the world is reflected in this soul. It sees the world as it is, and yet through the medium of love. And mildness is the predominant impression."

J. B. Basedow the pedagogue, a pupil of Rousseau, had come to Frankfort at the same time as Lavater. He wished to reform the education of children along the line of coarse naturalness, and, rationalist that he was, he explained away the miracles of the Bible. Accompanied by Lavater and Basedow, Wolfgang Goethe undertook, July and August, 1774, the Rhine journey which has been memorialized in the little poem entitled *Dinér zu*

Koblenz, and quoted time out of mind. He mirthfully portrays himself as sitting between Lavater and Basedow at a public table in the restaurant. While he eats his salmon and chicken Lavater expounds the Revelation of St. John to a clergyman and Basedow, in conversation with a dancing master, berates infant baptism:

Und wie nach Emmaus, weiter ging's  
Mit Geist und Feuerschritten,  
Prophete rechts, Prophete links,  
Das Weltkind in der Mitten.

On this journey he became acquainted with Wilhelm Heinse who, though convinced of the necessity of a national basis for all art, was pining for Greece and Italy and in his fancy was revelling in pagan sensuousness. His *Ardinghello*, which was supposed to represent the sensuous, strenuous individual of the Renaissance, is spiritually more akin to Lenz and Klinger than to Goethe.

It was also on this occasion that Goethe finally became reconciled with the two brothers Friedrich Heinrich and Johann Georg Jacobi. The quarrel of former days was forgotten; peace was to reign for a season.

In the home of Frau von Laroche, a favorite authoress of that time, a friend of Wieland for many years, Goethe had already become acquainted with Fritz Jacobi's excellent wife Betty. Moreover Jacobi's and Goethe's common friend, Johanna Fahlmer, to whom Goethe in his letters had shown great confidence, and who stood almost as close to F. H. Jacobi as his own wife, had done her utmost to bring the two men together, whom she valued most highly,

and who seemed the exact opposites of each other. Goethe decided to visit Fritz Jacobi in Düsseldorf, and though Jacobi had found peace in faith while Goethe was and remained a seeker, a bond of friendship was sealed.

## II

From a literary point of view there are several places in Goethe's life that might be termed points of attraction to and repulsion from the Jacobi brothers. Goethe's review of Georg Jacobi's self-defense on the occasion of his connection with the deceased Klotz has already been discussed. He also wrote in his early years, and unfortunately destroyed, the lampoon in verse entitled *Das Unglück der Jacobis*; likewise the above mentioned poem *Flieh, Täubchen, Flieh (So ist der Held)* a parody on the erotic tone and exaggerated tenderness between two men, occasioned by the *Briefe der Herren Gleim und Jacobi*; it embodied not a few passages from Jacobi's poems and letters to and from him. When we read, for example, "Roth ist sein Mund, der mich verwundt," we have to do with a parallel to the words of the letter "Unter tausend Küszen sag' ich Ihnen." Then we have the little pamphlet from the year 1779, just recently discovered, entitled *Woldemar's Kreuzerhöhung*. It is a jest in memory of the crucifixion which Goethe inflicted upon Jacobi's soft and sweet *Woldemar*.

The summer of 1779 was an especially merry time in Weimar. Anna Amalie held as usual court at ~~Ettersburg~~, and in the last of May Merck came to pay a visit of six weeks. One day he derided Wieland for an hour at the court table. The mirth be-

came so great that in September Wieland's aria from *Alceste*, *Weine nicht, du meines Herzens Abgott*, in Einsiedel's parody *Orfeus und Euridice*, was accompanied by post-horn and demanded *da capo*. (Wieland complains of this in a letter to Merck himself.) Another Ettersburg farce was the crucifixion of *Woldemar*. The friendship formed during the Rhine journey in July, 1774, had now begun to cool. Goethe felt that he was the target in *Allwills Briefe*. This novel was likewise one of the books satirically catalogued in Goethe's *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*. *Woldemar* had originally been published in Wieland's *Teutscher Merkur*, 1777, under the caption, *Freundschaft und Liebe. Eine wahre Geschichte*. It provoked Goethe's derision at the time, for it was likewise included in *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*. A revised edition was published in book form in 1779, under the peculiar title: *Woldemar: Eine Seltenheit aus der Naturgeschichte*. Goethe, having recently completed the first sketch of his *Iphigenie*, had now become an implacable antagonist of the sentimental heart-effusions such as had drawn nourishment from his own *Werther*. He was disgusted with this hubbub of debauchery in sentimentality and coquetish self-idolization. And he wrote a short burlesque in which the devil at last fetches *Woldemar*, delivers a philippic on this execrable book, and nails its two lids to a tree about as one might nail a bat's wings to a barn door. The parody in itself is a bagatelle on a little sheet, a student's prank, if you please. Deviations from the original wording amount in all to about fifty: We have *Die brennende Begierde nach Menschenfleisch* instead of

*Menschenherz.* We read also, *Der Weisheit toll und voll*, for simply *voll*. Woldemar says: *Ich wollte, das ich mein Herz fassen könnte, wie ein Weib ihre Brust, um Dich nöthigen, es zu trinken.* In Goethe's work the devil says: *Ich wollte, dass ich sein Herz fassen könnte, wie ein Weib die Zizzen einer Ziege, um Dich nöthigen, es zu trinken.*

There is, moreover, the poem entitled *Gross ist die Diana der Epheser*, 1811, intended as a protest against F. H. Jacobi's *Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarungen*. And finally, we have F. H. Jacobi's monograph, *Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza in den Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, 1789. The latter is motivated by Lessing's agreement with Goethe's *Prometheus*, and thereby with Spinoza's philosophy. In conclusion it must be said that the second, revised edition of *Woldemar*—despite the treatment accorded the first edition—is dedicated to Goethe in words the first of which deserve quotation, showing as they do with how little harmony friends, who fancy that they become greater through the bonds of friendship, are at times contented:

I dedicate to you a work which, without you, would not have been begun and never finished. It belongs to you; I give it over to you; to you as to no one else. You feel these words, old friend, and you give me your hand on it—likewise as you would give it to no one else. Twenty years have passed since our friendship was begun. At that time someone asked you in my presence whether we had not been friends from very childhood! You replied that this love was so new that if it were wine it could not be enjoyed. It has now become a noble wine.

Anything even remotely resembling a fruitful impression Goethe never received from the two broth-

ers. Yet there is a vague possibility that he took the idea of Faust's interrupted attempt at suicide from J. G. Jacobi's *Elysium*, 1774. Faust hears the singing of the Easter psalm and desists from taking his own life. In Jacobi's work the hero is just in the act of putting a beaker of water from Lethe to his lips when he is interrupted by a song.

Nor did the Jacobi brothers ever acquire a profound understanding of Goethe's real nature. Although F. H. Jacobi tried, in his *Allwills Briefsammlung*, 1776, to delineate a being like young Goethe, he succeeded in portraying nothing more than a gifted young man who is dangerous in the presence of ladies, an enemy of the law and its letter, of rules and their yeomen, a young man who follows his own natural inclinations, and who wants to allow all of his talents to attain unto their full and complete development. As to the rest, he is garrulous and of viewy diacticism. This young Goethe never was; nor could he ever acquire that type of characteristic.

### III

Fritz Jacobi, born in 1743, was thirty-one years old when he became acquainted with Goethe, then twenty-five years of age. As a very young man he had come to Frankfort to study business. After spending some time in various cities, he returned to Düsseldorf to take charge of his father's affairs, ill adapted though he was to a practical life as a merchant. He received an appointment at the Electoral Court Chamber (Düsseldorf lay at that time in the Electoral Palatinate) and when Goethe came, he found Jacobi enjoying a position of unusual dig-

nity, and living during the summer months at his country place out at Pempelfort. Goethe, whose sister Cornelia was acquainted with Jacobi's wife and sister, had been corresponding with the latter previous to his visit to Jacobi in 1774. For a time he was altogether happy in the home of the young man with the overflowing impulse to friendship. They laid bare their hearts to each other in endless conversations; they did mutual homage to the trend toward sentimentality then so pronounced; they felt like brothers who were separated "with the feeling of having been eternally united." Goethe writes to him:

You have felt that it was a source of ecstatic joy to me to be the object of your affection. Oh it is glorious to believe that each of us receives more from the other than he gives! Oh love, oh love! The poverty of wealth—and what a feeling pulses through me at the thought of embracing in another what I myself lack, and of presenting the other with what I have!

Talented youth is frequently just about as uncritical as this. It was impossible for Goethe to realize at that time that Jacobi's confidence was merely the conceit of a half-gifted youth; that his impulse to friendship rested on emptiness; that his entire stock in trade consisted of an unctuous flow of words; and that he harbored within his heart an irresistible urge to imitation.

He straightway sought to reproduce Goethe's personality, and to imitate his style. The amusing feature of this latter endeavor lay in the fact that Goethe's style of that era was not his own: it was borrowed. Under the initial and marked influence of the prophet of Zürich, who had so completely

captivated his mother, Goethe had involuntarily imitated his method of expression: he wrote with the same brand of open-hearted exclamations; he assumed the function of the oracle just as Lavater himself had done. The connection of Lavater's sentences was ingeniously slipshod by reason of its absolute naturalness. His language, the language of the righteous man of nature, at its best in the Swiss dialect, was apt to be full of shifts in the train of reasoning: it was either bold in its frankness or suggestive in its mysterious silence. We have precisely the same situation in the style of Goethe's letters from this period. Jacobi dilutes this style first with fresh and then with consecrated water.

Goethe had read some of his *Werther* to Jacobi before it had been published. Before it had been published, Jacobi had finished his wretched imitation, entitled *Allwills Briefsammlung*. Allwill was supposed to portray Goethe, an evil spirit who had fallen into a middle-class home. From the first the book was meant as a glorification—it appeared serially in Wieland's *Teutscher Merkur*—but before the end was reached Goethe had effected his crucifixion of *Woldemar*, had left Jacobi's letter of grievance unanswered, and now Jacobi's changed feelings vented themselves in a diminution of Allwill's human goodness. The book ends by having a young girl, to whom the hero has made advances, read him the text in an unconscionably long communication.

In the letter on Allwill's childhood Jacobi has made a crude attempt to characterize the contradictions in Goethe's make-up. He portrays the boy's refractoriness and bravery: "Several times he took the guilt and punishment for his comrades on him.

self; not so much out of friendship or sympathy, rather because he was disgusted at their entreaties and cries during the execution." The blandness of the young man's conduct is emphasized in the following way: "With all this there was not a shadow of impudence; on the contrary, he was so inexacting and modest toward everyone of whom he had a good opinion, so grateful and gentle, that most people thought he was either a fool or a flatterer." The young Lucie, for whom Goethe's Frankfort friend, Antoinette Gerock, is supposed to have been the model, expresses the same contradiction in Goethe's nature in her way:

Anyone who knows you intimately must often be surprised that you have not become either an angel of virtue or a devil of vice. The inconsistencies of your character correspond to no known formula: undisciplined sensualism, and stoic, effeminate tenderness; the utmost flippancy, and the coldest heart, the firmest loyalty; the sense of a tiger and the heart of a lamb; omnipresent and nowhere; everything and nothing.

It is this same girl who at last recapitulates the spirit of the book by saying to Allwill-Goethe, in italics: "The doctrine of intemperance, the principles of debauchery carried to the utmost limit, such are the terms for what you, with the levying of much sense, sophistry, and poetic embellishment, wish to substitute for seasoned wisdom."

As for *Woldemar*, it likewise has to do with Goethe in that Jacobi, in the preface to the second edition, insists that in the course of years he had entirely forgotten the novel and its characters (that he did not even own a copy of the book) when Goethe's *Tasso* appeared and recalled to him his own *Woldemar*.

He must have had the ability to fancy himself mirrored everywhere; for the similarity is slight; the original Woldemar is merely a self-portrait. Fritz Jacobi lived happily with his excellent wife Betty, born von Clermont, (perhaps the model of Therese in *Wilhelm Meister*), and at the same time in a relation of acute intimacy with Goethe's friend of years standing, Johanna Fahlmer. It was indubitably one of those double relations that Goethe had in mind when he wrote his *Stella*, 1774. Its real nature was an enigma to him. Jacobi made a novel out of it. The heroine of his book, Henriette by name, equipped with infinite charm and virtue, has been recommended to Woldemar by many men of many kinds as a suitable and desirable wife. Woldemar sees in her nothing more than a sister. She brings it about, however, that Woldemar marries her friend, the fascinating Alwine. She becomes and remains the third party in their alliance, though in perfect innocence and without awakening a shred of jealousy. If he is absent from home, she absents herself likewise and at the same time. For her to live without Woldemar's company is unthinkable; nor can he endure existence without her. The tittle-tattle of gossipy people eventually force them to separate.

In actuality the relation was such that Jacobi's stern old father, who in the novel has become Henriette's father, was highly enraged at his son because of some disparaging remarks he had made in a letter. Added to this is his embitterment over one of Fritz's errors of youth; he has had a child by a servant girl. The story leaked out, undermined his reputation, and perhaps caused the separation

from Johanna Fahlmer. There is a possibility, indeed even a probability, that at one time or another passion flamed up between them, for they did not associate with each other as entirely non-sexual beings.

But the novel *Woldemar* is non-sexual, insipid and vacuous. For a modern individual who is not German it is unreadable. We are forced every now and then to skip over about ten pages. The sentimentality is so intolerably thick that working one's way through it is like ploughing through a mountain of porridge. The brotherly love between Woldemar and Biederthal is so effusive in letters, kisses and embraces that it is distinctly hysterical. And like unto this is all the other love in this novel, the virtuous as well as the violent. Between man and man it is as ardent as it ordinarily is between mortals of different sex. Between man and woman it is so transcendent that the suspicion as to whether they could cherish warmer feelings for each other and be other than the angels in Heaven is done into a case of immense vulgarity or repellent stupidity.

Of preaching there is no end. The popular prejudices of the age are proclaimed just as they are in the works of Goethe's youth. But this is done in such a circumstantial way that twelve pages are covered with what could have been said in one sentence. We are informed with boundless diffusiveness that we should not allow our time to be taken up with idle, senseless, social affairs. Each one should go his own way, attend to his own business, and not try to be in perfect harmony with people of different dispositions and different minds. Here is one intelligible sentence: "Was it not foolish of a so-

prano voice to undertake a duet with a trumpet?" All the rest can be omitted. But the author is too self-complacent to impose upon himself such limitations.

Simplicity and veracity are desired. Objections are taken to unnecessary luxury which Diogenes and Rousseau would endorse. Rousseau's gospel of nature in general is preached, though with the limitations of individualism. Woldemar has always been a preacher of abstinence. He improved on the statement concerning the camel and the eye of the needle so as to make it read: It is easier for an elephant to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The camel was not enough for him. Later on he made concessions. But he continues his violent attacks on all comfort: This it is that embitters one's life. The man for example, who wants a saddle horse and who finally has this wish gratified, derives pleasure from his horse for a few days and then nothing but worry. He has to ride the horse in order to give him exercise when he has no desire at all to ride. Peace does not return to his soul until he has sold the beast. There is much more of the same kind.

These are his doctrines: Use your money as you like, have beautiful rooms and beautiful clothes, but guard against boastfulness and arrogance, do not try to appear what you are not, have what you have first for yourself and let others enjoy it with you! Your own senses, reason, will—truth, harmony—only this! And he tells in detail the story of a country fellow who so ardently longed for a pair of leather breeches that the life of his very soul was spent in thinking of them. It is a question of not

filling up your soul with such useless and barren thoughts.

Woldemar has theories on everything possible. He hates, for example, the nature gardens in the English style, so much admired at that time, for a garden is art, and nature neither can nor should be imitated. The cultivators of free nature should not have the right to enjoy a peach or an apricot, not even cherries, plums, and pears. Their aliment should consist of roots and wild chestnuts. In other words, Woldemar, like the author, is so opinionated that there is nothing concerning which he does not have an opinion; and he has no opinion which cannot be turned into a dogma.

Woldemar is a disciple of the Scottish popular philosophers, of Reid and especially of Ferguson. He loves virtue; and he loves it for its own sake; he abominates any sort of hedonism. To him the epitome of false philosophy is Helvetius, for Helvetius tried to deduce morality from egotism. Woldemar has tried to cultivate the animal at the bottom of his own nature, and to develop it to the highest point of perfection of which his being is capable. But in this way the last spark of real virtue vanished and man can no more live without virtue than he can live without food and drink. He was again obliged to create a virtue from the depths of his being. There follow treatises without number on virtue. No wonder that Jacobi became a believer in revelation. In his works we never detect the slightest trace of clearness, tangibility, corporality; nothing but eternal nonsense on the old spectre virtue.

Let us see how he appealed to the Dano-German

Baggesen,<sup>14</sup> who met him in Pyrmont during his first journey abroad in the year of the Revolution, 1789. For Baggesen, Jacobi is "an erect, remarkably well built, handsome man, and of an indescribably agreeable disposition." The Danish poet glorifies him in a passage which begins as follows:

His great and good mind shines forth unmistakably in every feature of his face, just as, to judge from all I have heard, it shines forth in every feature of his benevolent life. In his instructive and friendly society, as in his writings, thought and feeling are married to each other. He is one of the most excellent men, one whom I love and esteem most of the men on this earth. And from the moment when I first became acquainted with his heart, my resignation and admiration do not count seven stars of the first magnitude that shine with equal splendor in my idea of the human heaven. . . . His company was for me so extremely pleasant that I gave myself up to it only sparingly out of fear lest I might lose too much when obliged to leave him.

Lucky Baggesen! But poor Goethe! And to think that this Jacobi's quasi-friendly, quasi-equal relation was to be prolonged through forty years of Goethe's life!

<sup>14</sup> It is not surprising that Baggesen took this attitude toward Jacobi. He said of himself in 1797: "I am by nature, art, and fate a weak, fantastic, disorderly, peculiar, and passionate mortal."

—TRANSLATOR.

## CHAPTER XIII

### GOETHE'S BETROTHAL—LILI SCHÖNEMANN

WOLFGANG had again fallen violently in love. Early in the year 1775 he had been introduced, while in Frankfort, into the home of the banker Schönemann's widow, *née* d'Orville, a well-to-do and distinguished lady who lived in grand style. He was at once captivated by the charming daughter of the family, Anna Elisabeth Schönemann, then seventeen years of age. She was a beauty and a queen of the ball. Her hair was golden and her eyes were blue. She was confident and superior despite her youth. She was witty, given to mocking, inclined to be coquetish, and charming withal. Young as she was, it is hardly thinkable that she fully appreciated the inner preëminence of Goethe, then, too, anything but aged. But she sang his songs to piano accompaniment; she rode out by his side like an Amazon in full panoply. She introduced him into her cultured though superficial world. She drew him in short into the charmed circle of her personality so completely and strongly that by April, 1775, Wolfgang and Lili, as she was called and as she is referred to in Goethe's poems, became engaged.

The betrothal was not greeted with unmixed joy on the part of those most immediately concerned.

It did not suit Goethe's mother, who would have preferred to see her son married to a more quiet and domestic maiden of the city. The attitude of his sister Cornelia was distinctly hostile. Lili's mother and her guardian were opposed to the union, partly because they were familiar with the young man's earlier infatuations, partly because she was Reformed and he was Lutheran. Lili herself was ready to flee with Wolfgang to any part of the earth. She was even willing to follow him to America in case he found this move advisable.

Those were not mere external hindrances, however, on which the engagement stranded. It was the general unsuitability that became painfully evident to the young lover so soon as the first benumbing intoxication of love was a matter of history. Lili was a woman of dignity and worth, not simply a girl of attractive appearance. This has been proved completely by the courage she manifested under and during the difficult circumstances that surrounded her later in life. But she was only seventeen years old; and she gave her worshipper, all too inclined by nature to spells of jealousy, such abundant opportunity to experience the tortures of love that their betrothal seems to have been an affair of mutual anguish, interrupted at times by kisses and caresses—as so many betrothals have proved to be. But he loved her, very much indeed. A number of beautiful and genuine poems testify to posterity on this point.

We have for example the poem entitled *Neue Liebe, Neues Leben* which, with all of its effusiveness, reveals nevertheless an impulse to escape, long-

ings begone, crossed though the impulse is with the irresistible desire to be near her. It begins:

Herz, mein Herz, was soll das geben?  
 Was bedränget dich so sehr?  
 Welch ein fremdes, neues Leben!  
 Ich erkenne dich nicht mehr.  
 Weg ist alles, was du liebstest,  
 Weg, warum du dich betrübtest,  
 Weg dein Fleiss und deine Ruh—  
 Ach wie kamst du nur dazu?

Fesselt dich die Jugendblüthe?  
 Diese liebliche Gestalt?  
 Dieser Blick voll Treu un  
 Mit unendlicher Gewal'  
 Will ich rasch mich ih  
 Mich ermahnen, ihr e  
 Führet mich im Auge .  
 Ach mein Weg zu ihr z

There is also the lyric entitled *An Belinden*, the last two stanzas of which show clearly what plagued him and what pulled him:

Bin ich's noch, den du bei so viel Lichtern  
 An dem Spieltisch hältst?  
 Oft so unerträglichen Gesichtern  
 Gegenüber stellst?

Reizender ist mir des Frühlings Blüthe  
 Nun nicht auf der Flur;  
 Wo du Engel bist, ist Lieb', und Güte,  
 Wo du bist, Natur.

But the best description of the affair is not contained in the numerous letters to Auguste von Stolberg and Johanna Fahlmer, those letters in which he now in melancholy fashion calls himself "a

Shrovetide Goethe," and now places orders for jewelry for Lili, the most elegant that money can buy. The best description is contained in the humorous poem entitled *Lilis Park*. It describes a whole menagerie that she gathers around her as around a fairy. Like a queen she moves about among the various sorts of animals and feeds them. The animals compete for the position of greatest propinquity with regard to her; they rush over and between each other. Even Jupiter's eagle and Juno's peacock and Venus's dove come so soon as they hear her pip. But among this fauna there is found also an unlicked, untrained bear that Lili has brought into this otherwise tame company and has tamed along with the others. And this bear is happily-unhappy when in her company:

Zu ihren Füssen liegt das Thier.  
Sie sieht es an: "Ein Ungeheuer! doch drollig!  
Für einen Bären zu mild,  
Für einen Pudel zu wild,  
So zottig, täpsig, knollig!"  
Sie streicht ihm mit den Füssen übern Rücken;  
Er denkt im Paradiese zu sein.  
Wie ihm alle sieben Sinne jücken!  
Und sie sieht ganz gelassen drein.  
Ich küss' ihre Schuhe, kau' an den Sohlen,  
So sittig als ein Bär nur mag.  
Ganz sachte heb' ich mich und schmiege mich verstohlen  
Leis an ihr Knie. Am günst'gen Tag  
Lässt sie's geschehn und kraut mir um die Ohren  
Und patscht mich mit mutwillig derbem Schlag,  
Ich knurr' in Wonne neu geboren.

## II

We have seen what made the cursorily treated theme in *Clavigo* attractive to Goethe: the situation of the leading character. With this he was all too well acquainted; he himself was in it constantly, he was constantly troubled because he could not do as he naturally would have liked to do; he could not, he dared not, seize and possess precisely what he loved. Were he to do so he would be bound for the rest of his life. This frightened him. Were he to withdraw he would come to regard himself as guilty, albeit the guilt would be somewhat doubtful. And of what use was it for him to pretend a love which he no longer felt? And how could he help that?

It is his own exalted art in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* that has turned against him and furnished material for an indictment. He has made Friederike so enrapturing that it seemed inhuman to desert such a being. The apparently treacherous element in his conduct was possibly only self-preservation, even to a certain degree, however peculiar it may sound, self-renunciation for the sake of art.

The break with Lili must be regarded in a similar light. However indispensable she seemed to Goethe, he nevertheless felt that he must, some how or other, relieve himself of this situation. In many ways Lili would have been more worthy of him and would have suited him better than Christiane. But he was apparently unable to endure having his peer at his side in daily life.

Twenty years after the affair had been broken

off, and seventeen years after Lili had been married to Baron von Türkheim, she had a talk with the wife of General Beaulieu concerning Goethe. Having learned that this lady stood in close connection with Weimar, she hoped to hear some of the details of Goethe's life and fate from her.

"I consider him," she said, "as the creator of my moral existence. My passion for him was stronger than duty and virtue. I owe my own spiritual existence wholly and solely to his noble mind. I consider myself as his creation, and I shall hang on his picture with religious veneration to my very last breath." Seeing that there was only a remote possibility that she would ever come in contact with him again, she asked the lady in question to extend this greeting to her "unforgetable friend."

Goethe's "victim" cherished then no rancor against him. Quite the contrary: she continued to be grateful to him. It was however during his affair with her, in the now happy now unhappy moments, when his mind was enraptured by her beauty at the same time that he was yearning for his freedom, when she made him jealous out of thoughtlessness and yet loved him with intensity—it was then that he wrote the two operettas, *Erwin und Elmire* and *Claudine von Villabella*, together with the drama *Stella*, as evidences of their mutual infatuation.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Erwin und Elmire—Claudine von Villabella— Stella—THE IMPRESSION GOETHE MADE*

IT has become a rather fixed custom to speak of *Erwin und Elmire* as a pastoral play in the same style as *Die Laune des Verliebten*. But there is not a shade of parallel here, even though the one be regarded as a sort of complementary piece to the other, for in the former the girl plagues her lover by her coldness, whereas in the latter the situation is the reverse. *Die Laune des Verliebten* is rococo through and through; *Erwin und Elmire*, in its first form, has both *Götz* and *Werther*, and consequently all Gallic form, behind it. The play opens with a lively scene in which Olympia, elaborated with Goethe's rare mother as a model, represents, in sharp contrast to her daughter Elmire's inactive melancholy, the defects of modern, fashionable education as compared with the excellent features of the old, straightforward discipline of years ago. The scene corresponds to the one in *Götz* where both the hero and his wife complain of the bookish training which in reality cripples innate ability.

Elmire even dreams of the convent as a place of refuge (just as Elisabeth in *Götz* thinks of the monastery as an asylum for Karl). But the entire situation in this case is of no particular consequence. Through pretended indifference, Elmire has robbed

Erwin of his equilibrium. He has decided to disappear from sight. His friend Bernardo tells Elmire that he has ridden out and in the loneliness of the forest has found a noble hermit, a god-like man, who is created to give consolation to her grieved heart. It is naturally Erwin, who has taken his refuge in loneliness, cultivates his garden between the mountains, and masked, with white beard and a long cloak, learns of Elmire's despair, and at last throws off his mask and is united with her. The action is as juvenile as possible, but the numerous interspersed songs, which the Duchess Amalie set to music in 1776, are beautiful, fresh, warm, youthful, entirely worthy of Goethe.

The little operetta, originally dedicated to Lili, is occasioned by the pangs he suffered in his relation to her, and had thereby its natural ground of existence, and could be compared in this form with a light frame of youth around some excellent and beautiful songs. Some of them are to be sure so much more natural than the frame that a false light is thrown upon them. Take for instance the fact that, in the poem *Ein Veilchen auf der Wiese stand*, which Erwin is supposed to have sung constantly, it is the men folks who compare themselves with the little violet which the young shepherdess thoughtlessly treads under her feet. Men who compare themselves with flowers are a trifle distasteful.

The *Erwin und Elmire*, however, of the first prose sketch was much to be preferred to the piece that was included in Goethe's collective works as a finished operetta. The German poet certainly did not follow Victor Hugo's rule of correcting his faults in a succeeding work, a procedure that is most nat-

ural and commendable. The scientist is compelled to revise, for science progresses during the years that his work lies still. But a poet is generally punished if he allows a later idea, or a later bit of information, or a new artistic conviction, to be incorporated in an attempt of his younger days. As is known, Goethe had a decided inclination to do this very thing. He could never let a work that had once been finished get out of his hands; he laid it on the anvil again and again, and with his deep-seated tendency to procrastination continued to ruminate on old plans.

He took, along with so many other things, *Erwin und Elmire* with him to Italy, subjected it to infinite revision, transformed it into a conventional operetta in accord with the Italian taste of that time, and destroyed, weakened, or denatured all that had been naïve and innocent in the original. It is strange that he found no more productive occupation in Italy at that mature point in his life. It is strange that he felt no irresistible desire to create something new. Out of the initial sketch of this work he made a theatrical affair, written in irreproachable iambics, with many moralizing sentences, intended for experienced singers, male and female, but heavily laden with academic solemnity where there had once been a wealth of youthful gaiety. The original method of expression, with its varied locutions and phrases direct from Frankfort, gave way to an iambic trot that followed the rules. There is not a single glimpse of humor in this opera text—an enlivenment that is bitterly missed.

## II

The operetta in prose, *Claudine von Villabella*, like the first plan of *Erwin und Elmire*, belongs to the year 1775. The play has only negligible significance; it is fanciful and easily written, but far less puerile than its immediate predecessor. Derived from a Spanish source, there is naturally some action and much sabre-rattling. It reminds in truth, more or less, of the sword and mantle dramas of the seventeenth century. In its first fresh form, however, it bears the impress of the age to a quite marked degree; it also reveals the youthful Goethe's naturalistic style. The idyllic world in which the action takes place, and in which there is a noble father, his noble daughter, that father's noble friend, and the daughter's noble, visionary adorer takes on life and activity because this noble adorer has an irresistibly captivating brother who as a vagabond, brawler and professional seducer causes the entire family trouble. Since he moreover falls in love with Claudine and, during an attempt to reach her, happens, in the total darkness in which he finds himself, to inflict a wound on his virtuous brother, there is material for conflict, despair, gallows-humor, and a placable ending.

The style, like that of *Götz von Berlichingen*, can on occasion become quite vulgar. We read for example: "What! Should he any longer allow his brother to be led astray in this dissolute life, roaming about the country in company with gamblers and scalawags, deceiving more girls than another man knows of, and raising a quarrel more frequently than a drunkard urinates!"

The drama glorifies folk songs and folk melodies. The vagrants resemble genuine romantic robbers in that they are masters when it is a question of singing a song to the accompaniment of the guitar. Gonzalo, the old gentleman, is a friend of folk melodies. He says, in substance: In his day the country chap had a good time of it; he always had a song to sing which came from the lips and went to the heart. And when Gonzalo does honor to nature poetry it is because he sets great store on the natural state, *à la* Rousseau: "Where can you find nature just as it is with my rustic brother? He eats, drinks, works, sleeps and loves in a perfectly straightforward fashion and never once troubles himself a devilish bit about the sort of hocuspocus that is employed to mask all this in the cities and at the courts."

Gonzalo loses himself in rapture over old songs, love melodies, stories of murder and ghosts; nowadays one would ridicule the individual who sets a high price on such commodities. Crugantino informs him that, quite to the contrary, all ballads and romances and tavern songs are now zealously sought after and translated into many languages: "Our æsthetes compete for them." (It is plain that the reference is to Herder's efforts and to Goethe's folk song collections from Alsace.) In this connection Gonzalo breaks out in the spirit of *Sturm und Drang*: "That was indeed a good idea and somewhat incredible that they are gradually returning to nature. They used to comb the combed and curl the curled and run their hands through their curls and in the meantime imagine—it is hard to tell what."

Close to this protest from this child of nature

against flourishes we have—no less in the spirit of the age—an outburst of a rather offensive and grandiloquent bit of sentimentality. Crugantino, unceremonious coxcomb, impetuous Don Juan and robber captain that he is, has forgotten his cithern during a surprise. He apostrophises himself in the following terms:

If you had only not left your cithern in the lurch! That was a low trick for which you deserve to be boxed on the ears by a vile wretch. Your cithern! I could become insane! What should people say of a fellow who comes out of a fight alive and leaves his friend to the mercy of his foes? O fie on such a fellow, fie, fie! Your cithern, of more priceless value than ten friends! Your companion, your playmate, your sweetheart, who incidentally has outlived all your sweethearts!

When, at the close, Crugantino defends himself, he expresses the programme of the youth of his age. He has been requested to conduct himself better. He raises a question:

What does that mean, "conduct one's self better?" Do you know the needs of a young heart such as mine? Of a mad young head like mine? Where is there a place in the world for one such as me? Your middle-class society is intolerable to me. If I am to work, I must be a serf; if I am to enjoy myself, I must be a serf. Should not one who has a decent regard for himself rather go out in the wide, wide world?

This is an anticipation of Schiller's Karl Moor, who years later expressed even more solemnly the same, or a similar, heart-throb as the shibboleth of his soul.

The really valuable part of this drama consists

in the few interpolated songs. Though they are not to be numbered among Goethe's very best, they nevertheless bear the Goethean stamp. There is first of all the song of the vagabond:

Mit Mädeln sich vertragen,  
Mit Männern rumgeschlagen,  
Und mehr Kredit als Geld,  
So kommt man durch die Welt.

Then there is the little song entitled *Liebliches Kind*, and first and last the magnificent ballad, one of Goethe's most beautiful, effectively broken off in the middle of the closing line: *Es war ein Buhle frech genug*. It is doubly forceful since, as it originally appears here, it is repeatedly interrupted by dialogue and action.

The revision of the drama, which Goethe undertook twelve or thirteen years later in Italy, is quite considerable. As is the case with the other works revised in Italy, it is not simply the fact that iambic pentameters take the place of prose; it is not simply the fact that the lyric parts have been transformed into duets, trios, quartets and choruses with the tiring and tiresome repetition of the texts of the song. The action itself is completely changed. The wild brother to Don Pedro is no longer in love with Claudiine but with her cousin, a change which weakens the unity and suspense of the drama. Everything was simpler and clearer in the first form.

All that can be put down here on the credit side of the account is exclusively a matter of individual lyric entries. They are of high rank. There is first of all the profound and beautiful poem which, in just a few words, reproduces the history of the soul

of many a young man in that the conflict between ambition and love is poetized:

Es erhebt sich eine Stimme,  
Hoch and höher schallen Chöre;  
Ja, es ist der Ruf der Ehre!

Likewise Claudine's brief song:

Liebe schwärmt auf allen Wegen.  
Treue wohnt für sich allein;  
Liebe kommt Euch rasch entgegen  
Aufgesucht will Treue sein.

In this little verse, as every connoisseur feels, romantic poetry is anticipated. There is no doubt whatever but that this touch is repeated in such a poem as this one by Tieck:

Liebe denkt in süßen Tönen,  
Denn Gedanken stehn zu fern,  
Nur in Tönen mag sie gern  
Alles, was sie will, verschönen.

The song *Mit Mädeln sich vertragen, mit Männern rumgeschlagen* has gained by the revision; it has become fuller in content and less elementary in tone. We notice, in fine, in the entire short lyric woof the hand and style of the master. How picturesque and Goethean is the line

Von meinem *breiten* Lager bin ich vertrieben.

Nevertheless the impression as a whole remains that Goethe, then thirty-nine years of age, would have used his precious time in Italy to infinitely better advantage had he seen fit to create something new and forget these bagatelles of his younger days.

## III

It was also during his infatuation with Lili Schönemann that Goethe felt at times like the supposedly fascinating but unquestionably pitiable hero of *Stella*. The title came, as may readily be imagined, from Swift's double relation to Esther Johnson, whom he called Stella, and the other young woman who loved him, known as Vanessa. The latter wrote to Stella to find out whether the report was true concerning her clandestine marriage with Swift. In a fit of rage, Swift rushed at Vanessa and broke with her so tempestuously and violently that she became ill and died soon after of fever. Stella pined away.

From this situation we have the name. Public opinion has been irreconcilably against *Stella*. In Danish literature we have Wessel's<sup>15</sup> coarse parody. A man who loves two women, and two women who peacefully love the same man—that seemed ridiculous. And it is ridiculous according to our bringing-up and our prejudice. But there was more than one affair of that sort in those times. We have but to think of Bürger's double marriage to two sisters, which caused such a sensation in Göttingen and thereby in Germany. There was also Friedrich Ja-

<sup>15</sup> Johan Herman Wessel (1742-1785) was a Norwegian who wasted his life in idleness in Copenhagen. He preferred the Bohemian shiftlessness of the "Norwegian Club" to the writing of poetry—for which he had undisputed talent. Aside from a number of humorous tales in verse, such as "The Smith and the Baker," he is best known for his parodic tragedy entitled "Love without Stockings." All the devices known to French comedy are employed, and there is abundant cause for laughter at the bizarre conceits—and good lines. Wessel threw his life away.

—TRANSLATOR.

cobi's double relation to Johanna Fahlmer, Goethe's friend, the "little aunt," as he calls her—after Cornelia's death she became Schlosser's second wife—to whom he wrote so many intimate letters, and to his own wife, Betty, an admirable woman, who had effected a reconciliation between the poet and her husband.

Goethe himself, however, was the most immediate model for his Fernando. Again and again in his life he touches upon double moods that obviously allude to motifs of the drama. He comments, by way of illustration, on the splendid feeling that arises when a new passion begins to stir within us before an old one has completely vanished: "In a similar fashion one beholds at sunset the moon rising on the opposite side of the heavens, and one cannot but rejoice in the double ray of light from the sky."

He himself stood at that time in an easy relation to the two Münch sisters; but it was Friederike more than anyone else who, in union with Johanna Fahlmer, furnished him with the model for Cäcilie; and it was the delightful young Lili who gave him the fundamental traits of Stella's character. In her there is all the power of longing, and the intense joy that comes from meeting. It is Lili, and she alone, who even twenty years later refers to herself as Goethe's creation, that is speaking when Stella says:

How often has my whole being trembled and rung when he, in unrestrained grief, emptied the sorrows of the world into my heart! I begged him for Heaven's sake to spare himself! To spare me! In vain! He fanned the flames that surged through him into my own marrow. And thus the girl became, from the crown of her head to the sole of

her feet, all feeling and all heart. And where is there a place under the blue sky to-day in which this creature may breathe and find nourishment?

He has given her the joys and sorrows of a whole world, and she is aflame to the very marrow of her bones. God bless you, she says to him after he has returned. God forgive you for being so bad and so good. God forgive you—God, who has made you so—so fickle and so true. She is lovesick, cares not at all about marriage, and does not learn until later that it is impossible.

Goethe has made a weak attempt to give the impression of a strong character in Fernando by showing the passion he arouses even in the case of his administrator. Thank God, the administrator says, that you were not a gipsy chieftain. At a mere suggestion from you I would have burned and pillaged. It is also the administrator who explains to us why Fernando has deserted the good, amiable Cäcilie: his nature will not tolerate being tied down:

I was a fool, you said to me, to permit myself to be bound. This status chokes my powers; it robs my soul of its courage; it hems me in on all sides. And there is so much to me! Think of the extent to which I might develop myself! I must out and away into the wide world!

It is in passages such as this that one feels the mighty model back of this miserable hero. Goethe will have Cäcilie restore to Fernando his original freedom, and she is to do it out of magnanimity and from the purest of motives. Fernando, however, feels bound to her just as he is bound to Stella. His relation to Cäcilie is in truth of longer standing and greater delicacy. After a moment of idyllic happi-

ness, the Medusa-head of indignation arises and stays aloft, until the heart of a woman who feels with strength and vigor speaks the redeeming words: Here is nothing to be palliated, but also nothing that cannot be expiated.

Cäcilie tells the story of the German Graf von Gleichen who returns from the Crusade with the beautiful Oriental woman who has liberated him from slavery. His wife embraced the Saracen and said: "Take everything I can give you! Take the half of what belongs to you entirely. Take him entirely! Leave him altogether to me!" She threw herself on his neck, and then at his feet, and said: "We are thine!" The close of the drama is noticeably analogous to that of the legend in that Stella says: "I am thine!" Cäcilie concludes with the remarks: "We are thine!"

The intended effect of the play stranded on the wretchedness of Fernando's character: he is really too undependable, too pitiable. He takes leave of Stella without even saying farewell and runs after Cäcilie, having in the meanwhile learned where she is staying. But he had not been able to live with her! Hardly has he found Stella, to whom he promises unbroken happiness in the future, until he makes the same promise to Cäcilie, and prepares to abandon Stella, clandestinely and again without saying farewell. His plan is betrayed by the wrath of a waitress at his scurvy conduct. He is pitiable, and as a symbol of all his pitifulness stands his declaration to Cäcilie that when he could find no trace of her, he used his time—instead at least of returning to Stella—in fighting against the noble Corsicans (the revolt of Paoli), whose struggle for liberty he

admired. One of Goldschmidt's<sup>16</sup> characters later conducted himself in a similar fashion. The reference is to his *Arvingen*. Fernando says:

I could find no trace of you. Tired of myself and of life, I entered foreign military service, put on this uniform, and helped in the suppression of the noble Corsican's liberty.

It was quite impossible, naturally, for Goethe to let *Stella* rest in peace—two parodies on it had already appeared by 1776. In 1805, he completely remodelled the ending: In later editions, Stella takes poison and Fernando shoots himself.

#### IV

How are we to explain the fact that all of these heroes correspond so imperfectly to what Goethe really meant by them? The explanation is not far to seek: it lies in Goethe's shyness; in his reserve; in his modesty, a modesty that saved him from displays of ostentation. He was himself the model in all his weakness. But he could not bring himself to ascribe to the characters also his own insusceptibility, his own greatness. Of these virtues we learn nothing from him; for information concerning them we are obliged to appeal to his contemporaries.

<sup>16</sup> Meier Aron Goldschmidt (1819-1887) was Denmark's first journalist in a modern sense. A Jew himself, he did much to call the attention of Denmark to the Jews within her boundaries. After a fairly successful attempt at journalism, he established his *Corsaren* (The Corsair) in 1840 and made it a powerful and dreaded organ until it was discontinued in 1846. He fought for the ideas and ideals of a republic, attacked absolutism from every conceivable angle—and wrote some of the best short stories that have ever been written in the Danish language. As he grew older he became more conservative. His *Arvingen* (The Heir), a novel, appeared in 1865.

—TRANSLATOR.

In the thoughtless, tactless, overweening superciliousness of youth, he had offended nearly all of them. And yet! He had written his satirical review of Lavater's *Aussicht in die Ewigkeit* for the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen* of November, 1772. There he said:

Those who thirst after eternity always prepare for themselves that particular sort of sustenance, up in Paradise, that tickled their palates here, whether we have to do with the Heaven of the Orientals, or the Beer Hall or Valhalla of the Northern peoples. Lavater opens up a view for thinkers and scholars only. What he says is well meant, but it does not come from the soul.

A year later, November 9, 1773, Lavater writes to Herder concerning Goethe:

It seems that we shall come closer together. I rejoice with trembling. Among all the writers I know there is no greater genius. And yet, I had a kind of foreboding that that firm, smooth, straightforward, fraternal simplicity, that quiet though gorgeous humanity, would not be found in him in perfect proportion with his ability to think and feel.

On December 30 of the same year, however, he writes:

Goethe calls me brother; how shall I call him, the Unique? He is the incomparable, the fearfully exalted among men. But, dear brother, what objection have you to Christ?

Criticism of all kind is, however, soon eliminated. Lavater writes to his friend Zimmermann:

You would idolize Goethe. He is the most fearful and amiable of men. He would make a glorious, vigorous creature for a prince. He could be king.

Heinse, the author of *Ardinghello*, writes at the same time :

Goethe called on us. From top to toe, genius, power, strength, a heart full of feeling, a mind full of fire and equipped with the wings of the eagle. Resistance is impossible; he carries everything along with him.

Goethe had given open expression to his aversion with regard to the effeminate tendency of the Jacobis. As late as May 28, 1773, he sent his satire on Fr. Heinrich Jacobi to Klopstock, "the wildest I have ever written," he said, "I am sure it will never be published." Jacobi cherished a cordial grudge against Goethe, and warned Wieland against "this audacious person whose whims are incalculable." From the moment they first met, however, in July, 1773, Jacobi's hatred was metamorphosed into a species of adoring admiration. He writes to Wieland :

The more I think about it the more I appreciate the impossibility that resides in the attempt on the part of anyone who has never seen, never heard Goethe to write anything comprehensible on this extraordinary creation of God. Goethe is one possessed, one who is quite infrequently permitted to act arbitrarily. You hardly need to spend an hour with him without finding it extremely ridiculous for him to think or act other than he does.

Wieland sends the following jocular reply :

Dear brother, I beg you on bended knee to read *Don Quixote* until you have completely cured yourself of this gigantic style.

Two years later, however, the turn came to him who had been so ferociously scorned, even annihi-

lated, by Goethe in *Götter, Helden und Wieland*. On November 10, 1775, Wieland wrote to Jacobi:

What shall I say to you about Goethe? How completely he won my heart at first sight! How infatuated I became in him when one day I chanced to sit by his side at the table! This splendid young man! All that I can say to you on this subject is that since this morning my soul has been as full of Goethe as a dew-drop is full of the morning sun. . . . Ah, if he were to remain with us! Between Goethe and myself it has come to the point where the World, Sin, Death, and Hell are no longer of avail.

To Merck he writes:

Is there another instance on record where one poet has loved another poet with such inspired affection? For me life is no longer possible without this marvelous chap whom I love as my own son. And like a genuine father, I rejoice to see him outgrowing me in such a delightful manner.

In January, 1776, he writes:

I have now lived nine weeks with Goethe, and have been living since the union of our souls . . . completely in him. Viewed from any point, from every angle, he is the greatest, best, most glorious, human creature God has ever created. . . . There was a certain hour to-day when I had an opportunity to see him in his full glory. . . . Beside myself, I knelt before him, pressed his soul to my heart, and worshipped God.

During his stay in the home of Frau von Keller, on January 1, 1776, Wieland expresses his Goethe rapture in dithyrambic verse. Here are a dozen or so specimen lines:

Mit einem schwarzen Augenpaar,  
Zaubernden Augen voll Götterblicken,  
Gleich mächtig zu tödten und zu entzücken,  
So trat er unter uns, herrlich und hehr,  
Ein ächter Geisterkönig, daher!

Und Niemand fragte: Wer ist denn Der!  
 Wir fühlten beim ersten Blick: s'war Er!  
 Wir fühlten's mit allen unsern Sinnen  
 Durch alle unsernen Adern rinnen,  
 So hat sich nie in Gottes Welt  
 Ein Menschensohn uns dargestellt.

Der all Güte und alle Gewalt  
 Der Menschheit so in sich vereinigt!  
 So feines Gold, ganz reiner Gehalt  
 Von fremden Schlacken so ganz gereinigt!  
 Der unzerdrückt von ihrer Last  
 So mächtig alle Natur erfasst,  
 So tief in jedes Wesen sich gräbt  
 Und doch so innig im ganzen lebt.  
 Das lass' ich mir einen Zauberer sein.  
 Wie werden mit ihm die Tage zu Stunden,  
 Die Stunden wie augenblicks verschwunden,  
 Und wieder Augenblicke so reich,  
 An innerm Werthe Tagen gleich!

True enough, it is Goethe's countrymen who are speaking here, and Germans from the age of European sentimentality at that; but it is merely a case of outshone rivals, who are not generally inclined to songs of praise. And let it not be forgotten, they are men whom Goethe, in the pride of his youth, had deeply offended.

There remains sufficient testimony to give us a vivid idea of the impression of power and genius which the young Goethe made on the most illustrious of his contemporaries, and on women no less than on men. But we know too how he, unfortunately, with all too great conscientiousness belittled himself as the leading character in the works of his youth, with the result that it is almost only his weakness that we see.

## CHAPTER XV

### *Der ewige Jude—Hanswursts Hochzeit*

AMONG the numerous plans which the young Wolfgang made in his twenty-fifth year was also the superb description in verse of the peregrinations of the wandering Jew through all ages and all lands, hoping thereby to produce a concise picture of the spiritual and ecclesiastical history of the human race. He discussed the plan and gave completed specimens of it to Lavater in June 1774, on the journey from Wiesbaden to Schwalbach, and again a few weeks later at the dinner table in Ems. Lavater speaks of the work as though it were already a finished whole. In the meantime, however, Goethe abandoned the plan completely. He never finished more than ten pages. Again we have doggerel, vivacious, warm and warlike, but far too little to give us an idea of the intended work. We can only see that it would have been a virile attack on orthodoxy and the clergy without regard to confessional differences.

The tone of *Der ewige Jude* is disrespectful. The shoemaker of Jerusalem is portrayed quite as though he were a contemporary. He had a sanctimonious mind, was half Esselian and half Methodist. Indeed he is even called a Moravian. He and his kind demand daily signs and wonders, shake their heads

at the daughters of Zion, and make greater requests of the clergy than the latter fulfill.

The clergy were then exactly as they were in the eighteenth century, or just as it is apt to be with anyone on taking up office. However zealous they may have been at first, busy as ants and wise as serpents, so soon as they don their frocks they take it easy and grow fat. The philosophers of that time were also about as they were eighteen hundred years later. They assumed a supercilious attitude toward what other people took seriously, though they did not make any marked advance:

Ihr *non plus ultra* jeder Zeit  
War Gott zu lästern und den Dreck zu preisen.

The fragment contains otherwise not a single line on the Jew's offense against Jesus, nor does it contain any on his wanderings over the earth. We know only from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* that it was Goethe's intention, among other things, to have the Jew pay a visit to Spinoza; and it was a happy idea to have these two characters meet face to face. Unfortunately, it remained nothing but an idea.

We have the portrayal in verse of a situation in Heaven between the Father and the son. The Father calls out two or three times in vain to His son, who finally comes stumbling across the stars: he has been on one of them helping a woman in child-birth. The Father commands him rather to return to earth and see how things are going on there. The son swings down to earth, and on his arrival is immediately reminded of the wretched manner in which he was treated during his first sojourn there.

The verses which depict the emotion of Jesus the second time he breathes the air of the earth are beautiful indeed and replete with genuine feeling. The son is brought to realize how even the purest of happiness has in it at least the presentiment of sorrow. He greets the earth as he saw it the last time from the heights of Golgotha :

Sei Erde tausendmal gegrüsst!  
Gesegnet alle meine Brüder;  
Zum ersten Mal mein Herz ergiesst  
Sich nach drei tausend Jahren wieder  
Und wonnevölle Zähre fliest  
Vom nimmer trüben Auge nieder.  
O mein Geschlecht, wie sehn ich mich nach dir!

He tarries for a moment on the mountain where friend Satan tempted him; he looks about and discovers to his painful surprise that it is this same gentleman, the Prince of Darkness, who has conquered and is ruling over the earth. Everywhere scurvy covetousness stretches forth her greedy claws; everywhere the prince shuts himself in with his slaves in his marble castle and squanders nourishment enough for thousands; everywhere the golden sign of Jesus's sufferings of the past glistens as it depends from the breasts of those who wear it officially, idle and pudgy now that they have become.

By the Prince, Goethe manifestly thought of Louis XV, who was contemporaneous. The country first described is Catholic; but when Jesus goes from this to a Protestant people he finds that precisely similar conditions obtain. On leaving the land of the crucifixes he comes to a land where it is impossible to feel or see that there is any God at all; he visits a Protestant clergyman who has a fat wife;

the twain are in bed; they have many children; and they have many tithes.

Er war nunmehr der Länder satt,  
Wo man so viele Kreuze hat  
Und man für lauter Kreuz und Christ  
Ihn eben und sein Kreuz vergisst.  
Er trat in ein benachbart Land  
Wo er sich nur als Kirchfahn fand,  
Man aber sonst nicht merkte sehr  
Als ob ein Gott im Lande wär.

Accompanied by the pastor, Christ betakes himself to the city where a convention of clergymen was to be held on that particular day. Asked at the city gate to give his name and rank, he replies with marked humility and modesty, "I am the Son of Man." The scribe fails to grasp this statement until a brandy corporal remarks by way of elucidation: "His father's name must have been *Man*." Jesus asks to be conducted to the senior pastor. He and his companion are received, however, by no more pretentious person than the cook who, dropping a head of cabbage from her apron, says that the pastor has already gone to the conference. It was Goethe's plan to depict an entire group of degenerate, worldly-minded clergymen who make up the assembly, but the poem breaks off at this point.

It is highly illuminating to compare this work on the descent of Jesus to earth, written in the year 1774, the product of the free-thinking young man, with the account of Christ's descent into Hell, written in the year 1765, the product of the orthodox boy.

## II

Another fragment from the year 1774, unimportant in itself though written in a fiery mood, is *Hanswursts Hochzeit*. Though farther from being complete than the above work, it testifies to the poet's most defiant and disdainful mood. It was sketched in all probability while Goethe was engaged to Lili, and while he was meditating on his own wedding.

A young man, of whom it is said that he is known the world over, and referred to as a genius from Salzburg to Petersburg, appears in fool's dress: it is Goethe himself in the guise of Hanswurst. He is told not to be so gruff, as geniuses generally are. The fragment portrays the tortures and oppressions the poet had to endure from his latterly acquired fame over the publication of *Werther*.

As a starting point, Goethe had taken an old melodrama from the seventeenth century, *Harlekins Hochzeitsschmaus*, though he retained nothing more than the title and a few characters. Goethe's Hanswurst wallows in the coarsest of linguistic expressions: he uses words which in the German of our day cannot be printed. Kilian Brustfleck—another Harlekin—the guardian of Hanswurst, challenges the latter, now that he is a bridegroom, to become dignified and never to use a wanton word. He can take his redress in silence by living just as stark mad a life as he pleases. Famous as he is, there will be wedding guests in profusion. The entire address-book of the Germanic world will be represented. Hanswurst replies in language that cannot be quoted, saying that these guests will do nothing more than

eat at the wedding feast, whereas his immediate yearnings are of a different nature: He would much prefer to take his Ursel along with him up to the hayloft.

This is virtually all that has been worked out. But Goethe amused himself by giving a list of the names of the expected wedding guests, a list in which he displays a genuine Rabelasian fancy. It is sufficient to name just a few of them: Ursel Blandine, *Braut*; Ursel mit dem kalten Loch, *Tante*; Hans Arsch von Rippach; Hans Arschchen von Rippach, *empfindsam*; Schindluder; Thomas Stinkloch, *nichts Gerings*; Blackscheisser, *Poet*. There is a catalogue of no fewer than one hundred and fifty such proper names. It was probably Goethe's purpose, when he used them, to stigmatize some of his contemporaries against whom he bore an unrelenting grudge.

There is a rejected outline of the twenty-second chapter of Heine's *Atta Troll* which is constructed on an idea similar to this. It is the chapter in which King Solomon proposes riddles to the Queen of Sheba. Among others there is this one: Who is the greatest scoundrel among all German scoundrels? The Queen mentions one name after another:

Hundert Namen hat seitdem  
Schon die Königin eingesendet;  
Immer schrieb zurück der König:  
Kind, das ist noch nicht der grösste.

Heine's idea however, as is so frequently the case with his poetic conceits, was carried out, though later replaced by another poem. Goethe's plan was left lying as a fragment of five or six pages, never again to be taken up.

## CHAPTER XVI

### KNEBEL'S VISIT: WEIMAR—THE STOLBERGS; JOURNEY TO SWITZERLAND

ON December 11, 1774, Goethe received a visitor whose message was to have a decisive influence on the course of his life from that moment on: Karl Ludwig von Knebel called. He was an amiable Prussian officer, the senior of his host by five years. He had entered upon a position in Weimar as a tutor to the young Prince Konstantin. He it was who introduced Goethe to Karl August, heir presumptive to the throne of Sachse-Weimar, then on a journey through the country which included Frankfurt as a stopping place.

The state to which the Prince was to fall heir was a very small one; Thuringia was in general the homestead of petty principalities. In Ruhla in the Thuringian Forest, a brook in the middle of the village separated the land of Gotha from that of Weimar. A student, in case he were a trifle jubilant, could start a quarrel with the police of five different sovereigns while taking a single walk. Even forty years later, in 1815, there were 700,000 people in Thuringia under the sway of no fewer than five Saxon dynasties, three from the House of Reuss, and two from the House of Schwarzburg. On no less than three different occasions had this country been a nursery of German intellectual and

spiritual life: In its day, the Wartburg was the home of the Minnesingers; it later became Luther's place of refuge; and a still more glorious fate was in store for Weimar.

Weimar, nowadays the city of great memories—venerable as a museum, small in compass, beautiful and smiling, gliding in and out through avenues and gardens in which the ducal park, intersected by the Ilm, constitutes a sort of central point, was, at the beginning of the year 1774, very much smaller and very much poorer, just a little town surrounded by wall and moat.

Over the tiny state there ruled a young, vivacious, capable widow, some thirty years old, Anna Amalie, as regent for her son not yet of age. She was a Princess of Brunswick, a niece of Frederick the Great. She was married at the age of seventeen to the Duke of Weimar. She became a widow at the age of nineteen, then *enceinte* with her second son. While she herself ruled to the best of her knowledge, she took all possible pains with the education of her oldest son. When only five years of age he received as his tutor a certain Count Görtz, who, however, in the opinion of his mother, tried to win the favor of the heir to the throne by being far too lenient toward the fiery, intractable boy. (This is the Görtz alluded to in *Stella*, scene one, where they speak of old political crones who start gossip.)

Anna Amalie was one of the few German Princesses who at that time did not hold the German language in contempt. At her court both German and French were spoken, and as her son grew up she asked the advice of Wieland, her guest from time to time, as to the boy's capabilities. Wieland

had just written his *Goldener Spiegel* in which he spoke the truth to German Princes in a jesting way. Since his letter of response strongly praised the Prince's intellect, studiousness, love of truth, and aversion to flattery, it came natural to the Duchess to persuade Wieland to take over the position of teacher of philosophy for her two sons.

There was an especial need that Karl August's disposition be changed; he was cold, unapproachable, gruff. The tutor was to ennable and mollify his charge's nature. He was to make him more accessible to other people—including his mother.

The gentle and timid Wieland had, however, done nothing but join forces with the courtier Görtz, so that the Duchess soon came to the conclusion that the count and the poet together, as indeed all the others at the court, were flattering her son, and, with an eye single to the future, were correcting him too rarely and too mildly. Even the secretary of the treasury, who was constantly reminding her of the lack of money, had an abundance for Karl August, not yet of age. On this account the relation between the mother and the son became tense and bitter.

The energetic and imperious lady would not let her boy have his own way, lest he come to grief because of lack of early discipline. The son in turn was highly offended because his mother slighted him. Was she not accustomed to calling him Prince just as she called his younger brother whom she preferred? Should she not call him Duke, even as a minor? The Duchess became in time so unhappy over the general dissatisfaction that prevailed at the court that she actually thought of resigning

the regency one year before the appointed time. Her Prime Minister dissuaded her from so doing.

Moreover, at the beginning of the year 1774, a great misfortune befell Weimar: the sole building of really palatial proportions, the castle and the theatre connected with it, was burned to the ground. This gave rise to new discord between the mother and her determined son. Amalie, believing that the decision should come from her, decided to take up her official residence in three private houses that lay side by side. But the heir to the throne, seeing that the decision would still be in effect during the first years of his own reign, chose, as the ducal residence, a larger and more imposing villa, then in process of erection. He carried out his determination, though the house in question, having been built rapidly and carelessly, proved to be a distinctly unsanitary and disagreeable place of abode.

In September, 1774, the Duchess introduced Karl August, then seventeen years old, into the council of state; in other words, he was treated as a mature individual. But she still denied him the title of Duke and he, in turn, was now too proud to demand it.

Since she thought of forming a small court for him, she asked him to tell her which of the gentlemen of the royal household he preferred. No sooner, however, had he named some of his own favorites when he was informed that he could choose only from the gentlemen of the bedchamber. He named then, among others, the master of horse, Baron Gottlob von Stein, destined eventually to become famous on account of his wife.

The Duchess had formerly expressed quite vigorous opposition to every journey that had been pro-

posed for her son; she was even unwilling to have him stay at a university. Now, however, she permitted Karl August to travel, though with the sole and distinct purpose of selecting for himself a fiancée. They ran through the lists of marriageable princesses and the mother's choice fell on Princess Luise of Hessen-Darmstadt. His desire to marry was in reality no stronger than Frederick the Great's had been when his father forced him into marriage with a princess whom he neither loved nor knew nor cared to know. And yet, Karl August acquiesced in his mother's wishes. The journey could be made; Karl August and Konstantin, with their tutors, could set out for France. They were to stop on the way in Karlsruhe where the Princess was then visiting, her acquaintance was to be made and, if possible, the engagement was to be announced.

In December, 1774, the Princes began their journey, accompanied by their tutors, the above-mentioned Count Görtz and the poet Knebel, the latter of whom was to achieve substantial fame as the translator of Alfieri and Propertius, and especially of Lucretius's didactic poem entitled *De rerum natura*. They were also accompanied by the master-of-horse, Baron von Stein, and the court physician. They arrived at Frankfort on December 10; they could remain there but a few days. There was living at that time a young man in Frankfort whom they were exceedingly anxious to see: He was supposed to be a genius—in the language of the age, a Heaven-stormer—had written a dramatized history entitled *Götz* which Karl August had found excellent, also a novel entitled *Werthers Leiden*, which was regarded as magnificent though it had

made no impression on the heir presumptive to the throne—sentimentality was not his affair. The author had, to be sure, derided the Prince's popular teacher, Wieland, but only in a farce; moreover, the one criticised had himself admitted, with the refinement and discretion of a great talent, that the aforesaid farce was a little masterpiece of persiflage and sophistic wit. Not even that bit of facetious writing could hurt him in the eyes of the young Prince. The handsome, stately Knebel, then thirty years old and an admirer of talent wherever he saw it, took it upon himself to call on this uncommon personality. He entered the beautiful old house Am Hirschgraben wherein he found a man twenty-five years old, erect and splendid to behold, apart from his brilliant eyes. Knebel was at once all fire and flame. On being told that the Princes, who were staying at the Römischer Kaiser, were to leave the following day, he went along back with Knebel to the hotel.

Thus Karl August and Goethe stood face to face for the first time in their lives. The Prince, seventeen years of age, made a pronounced impression on the Poet: What the former said was clear and vigorous; though short and slender, he was by no means without dignity; he was quick-witted; he expressed himself in plain and simple terms; there was nothing forced or affected about him. Goethe saw that that was a prince in whom he could take hope.

But the Poet made a far stronger impression on the Prince: His mercurial liveliness, his conversation in which he gushed forth conceit after conceit and revealed an abundant store of ideas, captivated Karl August completely. Goethe was obliged to remain

until evening. Nor was this all: the Prince invited him to visit him again in Mayence. Knebel remained in Frankfort with Goethe so as to accompany him.

Their association was renewed in Mayence. For Knebel Goethe was even now "the very best of all men." This remark impressed the Prince, having as he did a high regard for Knebel. They discussed Goethe's farce on Wieland. With remarkable self-depreciation, the young poet called the little masterpiece "a jocular prank." The best impression of all was made by the fact that in a postscript to a letter from Knebel to Wieland he himself characterized his attack as a mere joke.

In Karlsruhe the Prince's engagement took place. He and Goethe met again, the latter having gone there on a short visit.

## II

The two young Stolbergs, both of them poets in a small way—Count Christian was the older, Count Friedrich Leopold was the less gifted—had just finished their studies at the university and, after the fashion of the time, had started out on what was then popularly known as a *Geniereise*. Auguste von Stolberg, later the wife of the Danish Minister A. P. Bernstorff,<sup>17</sup> had for a long while been carry-

<sup>17</sup> Count Andreas Peter Bernstorff (1735-1797), hardly less renowned than his uncle, Johan Hartvig Bernstorff, was twice married, his two wives being the sisters of the Counts Christian and Friedrich zu Stolberg. Entering the service of his state as early as 1759, he remained in it until his death, except for brief periods of "dismissal," as, for example, at the time of the Struensee affair. He played a decisive rôle in the incidents preceding the Napoleonic Wars, and is regarded by many careful students as one of Denmark's greatest benefactors.

—TRANSLATOR.

ing on an intimate correspondence with Goethe, though he never came to know her personally. Under these circumstances it was quite natural that the brothers should visit the poet in Frankfort. They suggested to him that he accompany them on their journey to Switzerland. The party was further augmented by Count Kurt von Haugwitz, with whom Goethe was soon on an intimate footing. Von Haugwitz later entered the diplomatic service and, as Minister of Prussia, failed to shed lustre on the affairs of his country during the years of Napoleon's unusual activity, 1805 and 1806. The Stolbergs were two of the eggs Klopstock had hatched. At this stage of their careers they were rather unsettled nature poets and visionaries with regard to liberty and freedom: It was not always easy to surmise that they were counts of the blood from their external deportment.

In the same year, Fritz Stolberg wrote in his *Ode an die Freiheit*:

Nur Freiheitsschwert ist Schwert für das Vaterland!

Wer Freiheitsschwert hebt, flammt durch das  
Schlachtgewühl

Wie Blitz des Nachtsturms! Stürzt Paläste!

Stürze Tyrann dem Verderber Gottes!

O Namen, Namen festlich wie Siegesgesang!

Tell! Hermann! Klopstock! Brutus! Timoleon!

As we see, Klopstock is placed between Arminius and Brutus among the heroes of liberty. The brothers belonged to the *Göttinger Hain* and, like their sister, became attached to Denmark. Both of them also became in time zealous reactionaries. Friedrich Stolberg's conversion to Catholicism cre-

ated at that time a great sensation and caused his break with Voss, who wrote on this occasion his polemical pamphlet entitled *Wie ward Fritz Stolberg ein Unfreier?*

At this first meeting both brothers were tremendously enthusiastic about Goethe; the journey was begun in Werther costume. The young men were kindly received in Darmstadt by Merck and in Karlsruhe they met, aside from Karl August, the future Duchess Luise von Weimar, of whom Goethe wrote: "Luise is an angel." He gathered up some flowers that fell from her bosom and kept them in his letter case. In Strassburg the cordial relation with Lenz was renewed. Goethe could not help but think, with sorrow of course, of Friederike, whom he did not wish to grieve with a visit so soon after his first affair. In Emmendingen he visited his sister, then, as he knew, physically broken down and very low-spirited. But Wolfgang's stay had a good effect upon her; she felt quite happy for a few days in his presence.

The young travellers saw the Rhine Falls at Schaffhausen. Goethe received his first strong impression of Swiss scenery which, however, aside from *Jery und Bätely*, he never glorified, though he kept it all so well in his mind that he was in a position later in life to entrust the reproduction of it, with all the material for *Wilhelm Tell*, to his friend Schiller.

In the month of June Goethe rode into Zürich where he stayed with Lavater and made the acquaintance of a number of prominent Swiss citizens, including old Bodmer, who had once invited the sacred poet of *Der Messias* to spend some time with

him, and who soon felt quite surprised at the way Klopstock flirted with all the pretty girls. Klopstock and his host separated in coolness. Bodmer was then seventy-seven years old and saw in Goethe only a hot-head. Among his observations on him, two are especially worthy of note: Goethe called Brutus and Cassius scoundrels (*Niederträchtige*) because they stabbed Cæsar from the rear; and it is said that Goethe is planning to write a tragedy on *Dr. Faustus*, a theme out of which this mad-cap could make a better farce than a tragedy.

Goethe indulged in some mountain climbing, including St. Gothard. From Altdorf he dispatched a short, cordial note and a longer and no less cordial poem to Charlotte Kestner. A few days later he wrote to Lili the little poem beginning:

Wenn ich, liebe Lili, dich nicht liebte,  
Welch Wonne gäb' mir mir dieser Blick!

At the same time he jotted down in his diary the jubilant and unsentimental exclamation:

Ohne Wein und ohne Weiber  
Hol' der Teufel unsre Leiber.

Directly underneath this he entered the evidence of his devotion to nature:

Ich saug an meiner Nabelschnur  
Nun Nahrung aus der Welt,  
Und herrlich rings ist die Natur,  
Die mich am Busen hält.

At the close of July he was back in Frankfort. He had not yet broken with Lili. He went riding with her, attacked though he was by another fit of

jealousy and not unaware of the dissatisfaction felt by the older generation at the thought of a union between the two. The break was imminent and he himself was at once moved and depressed. The work he had planned on *Egmont* simply would not progress.

Karl August had repeatedly asked him to come to Weimar on a visit. Goethe kept the invitation open by sending him, through Knebel, some of his works. Then, on September 3, 1775, Karl August took the reins of government in his own hands. On October 12, he came to Frankfort with his young consort. The invitation to Weimar was renewed in more definite form: Goethe, accompanied by Chamberlain von Kalb, who was then in Karlsruhe, was to betake himself to the Thuringian capital.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *Urfauſt*

BUT before things had reached this stage, young Wolfgang had written still another work, this time a dramatic fragment. He seems to have got the idea at the close of 1773. He elaborated the first and larger half between October 1774, and the beginning of 1775; the second and smaller half in the late summer and autumn of 1775. Then he laid the manuscript aside just as it was until 1788, when, during his second sojourn in Rome, he took it up again and tried to work himself into the spirit and tone of those younger days. He did not publish it until 1790; it came out as a "Fragment."

What he finished however in the autumn of 1775—he was then twenty-six years old—was, it matters not how slipshod his treatment of the theme may have been, the best bit of poetry that had been written on this earth within the past one hundred and seventy years. Goethe himself never surpassed it. Beginning with *Faust* 1775, he stands on such a height as a poet that his name is inscribed by the side of the greatest of all mortals. These eighty-nine pages contain a riotous sum of feeling, wit, fancy, and reason, an abundance of genuine euphony and such inimitable art in the portrayal of the three fundamentally human and yet symbolic characters, and in some of the subordinate characters as well,

that all criticism about petty points disappears before an inevitable admiration that is akin to reverence. This is written for all time; it will never be forgotten so long as the German language is understood.

If one attempts to explain just why these pages are, as it were, asbestos, why they can be destroyed neither by fire nor by water nor by time, one sees that the explanation lies first and foremost in the fact that Goethe has gone deep down into the purely elementary and quite original element in the life of feeling and passion of a childlike young woman. He has sung of that which is indissoluble in its eternal simplicity, unshakable, as strong as granite. In direct contrast to this he has placed the investigative spirit of the man who yearns for definitive knowledge regarding the constituency of the cosmos, the forces of nature, all the rich and mysterious meaning of life, and his intense though transitory longing for the young woman who entices, moves, and melts him without being able to hold him. The meeting and association between these two is emphasized, placed in strong relief, by the scenes between Marthe and Mephistopheles. Marthe, humorously conceived, is the older and more experienced neighbor, who is as if made to be a procuress, though she herself seeks the men with pleasurable intent. Mephistopheles is neither the Devil of the Mediæval Mysteries and Moralities, nor the evil incarnate of the theologians, nor the fallen angel in his rebellion against the God of the Bible, nor the Satan of Milton, nor the Lucifer of Byron. He is the cynic who is never ridiculous and revolutionary, a thorough judge of man, a witty

head without kindness, a stranger to compassion, a figure whose very being consists in seeing through men and the plans of men, an agent of cold mockery and supercilious caprice.

The Faust theme is a very old one. It was first recorded (1587) by the bookdealer, Johann Spies of Frankfort, and dramatized in London by Christopher Marlowe (1589), the re-creator of English tragedy. Marlowe's is an ingenious and juvenile work. After having been carefully staged, it was performed for the first time since the days of Elizabeth in London in the summer of 1896. The impression the performance made was more nearly that of a Mediæval Mystery than of a Renaissance drama. Marlowe was the first to put the spirit of rebellion in Faust, originally merely a shade and a conjurer. What Marlowe's Faust longs for is power, earthly omnipotence; Goethe's Faust strives after wisdom, earthly omniscience. The energy of the entire Renaissance, combined with that of Marlowe himself, is to be found in the English Faust; thirst for knowledge such as characterized the age of Humanism, combined with that of Goethe himself, animates the German Faust. His point of departure is his grief and anxiety at the inadequacy of his knowledge; he is depressed at the thought of his fragmentary insight into the nature, the ideas of the cosmos.

In Germany Marlowe's drama was first arranged for the folk-stage and then adapted to the puppet-theatre. In a letter from Mendelssohn, dated November 19, 1775, we learn that Lessing intended to write a middle-class *Faust*. In reality Lessing had two *Faust* plans in mind: one that followed

tradition and exploited spirits and devils; another in which the seducer of the leading character was to have a purely human nature. The single scene, "Faust with the seven spirits," of a *Doktor Faust*, which Lessing published in the seventeenth *Literaturbrief*, February 16, 1759, corresponds to the old Christian view which saw something uncommonly devilish in the specially rapid gratification of the senses.

From Marlowe the tradition was handed down to Goethe, *via* the puppet-theatre, that Faust should begin with a monologue in which he lashed the faculties of the universities. Even in the *Urfraust*, 1775, this monologue has its full power and boldness. Only the introductory lines, which were a trifle unfelicitous, were speedily revised into the admirably vivacious ones that we of to-day all know by rote. Otherwise the monologue as a means of dramatic exposition was taken over by Goethe from Hans Sach's diminutive dramas, to which Goethe here reverts, as he did so frequently in the works of his youth. From Hans Sachs he had borrowed the tetrametric doggerel which in his hands continued to be naïve, but also pithy and profound. The day of the ambling German Alexandrine had gone so far as he was concerned; English blank verse—unrhymed iambic pentameters—which Lessing had introduced in his *Nathan* (1779), had not yet been mastered by him, or it did not appeal to him; free dramatic prose with its loquacious naturalism, which he had preferred in *Götz* and which his confederates, Lenz and Klinger, employed without ceasing, he retained, following the example of Shakespeare, in only a few isolated scenes.

Doggerel, however, which is genuinely German, which reminds of the national past, which he is in a position to make all the more pliable, which he interrupts now and then with a song or with rhymed iambic pentameters (even in the midst of strophic forms), with Alexandrines, with free, rhymeless, short rhythms, with speeches that are lyric poetry in themselves and that have an anapæstic swing, ingeniously and melodiously rhymed lyric poetry, doggerel which is free in its movement, bold in its bearing, jocose and mocking, though it can swell to pathos or glide over into Pindaric sublimity, into Ossianic solemnity, into song that grips the heart, doggerel—this is the favorite instrument of his soul throughout the entire epoch, and in no place has he, playing with it and on it, risen to such heights of greatness and virtuosity as in *Faust*.

He did not need to seek outside of himself in order to find the innate instinct which enables its enviable possessor to recognize and encompass existence in its unity and totality; for such a gift was Faust's own, just as it was the mark of his own inner and outer life; it was his initial incitement.

The idea of a spirit world and its power, in which he has Faust seek refuge and consolation, he had found in the works of the then noted Swedish spiritualist, Emanuel Swedenborg,<sup>18</sup> who had published

<sup>18</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), though known principally for his theosophy and New Thought, had a wealth of experience in other fields. At the siege of Frederikshall in 1718 he invented a machine for the transportation of boats overland from Stromstadt to Iddefjord. In 1716 he was appointed assessor of the Swedish college of mines. But in 1743 he began to have visions and gave up all other work in order to expound the Bible as the immediate mouthpiece of God. He held Revelation XXI-2 to be the prediction of the establishment of a new dispensation. He himself never contemplated the founding of a separate church. He thought that

his mystic *Arcana coelestia* in London between the years 1749 and 1763. It is proof indeed of Goethe's immeasurable desire for knowledge that he felt inclined to, and had the ability to, plow through this mass of madness. It is proof too of his mental maturity and superiority that, though only twenty-five years old, he could use Swedenborg's teachings on spiritualism in a purely artistic way and to a purely æsthetic end without ever once becoming caught in them. A hundred and thirty years later Strindberg,<sup>19</sup> then sixty years of age and over, became hopelessly enmeshed in this same web of supernaturalism.

As a ghost-seer, Swedenborg was not merely *en rapport* with the spirits of men long since dead, Vergil for example; he was also informed as to the spirits of the various planets which, each for itself, comprised the individual spirits, one and all, that belonged to the sphere in question. In harmony with this teaching, much more valuable as a constituent part of poetry than of science, Goethe created the Earth Spirit, which reveals itself to Faust with terrifying visage.

Young Goethe felt that he was doubly hindered in his attempts to understand: He was not merely an individual mortal; he did not see things as they are but as they are reflected in him; he comprehended his doctrines would in time permeate all other existing churches. The Swedenborgians were first organized in London, in 1778, under the name of "Society of the New Church Signified by the New Jerusalem."

—TRANSLATOR.

<sup>19</sup> There is reason to believe that Johan August Strindberg (1849-1912) became entangled in the meshes of mysticism, spiritualism, and cognate themes before he was sixty years old. Neither his "New Kingdom" (1882) nor his "Keys of Heaven" (1892) nor his "Damascus" (1898) nor his "Advent" (1899) can be said to bristle with clarity.

—TRANSLATOR.

only the spirit that he resembled; the significance of the Earth Spirit lay beyond him. Moreover, as a mortal man, he did not enter into the actual thoughts of life; for he had only the word, and that was inadequate. Wagner was satisfied when he had a method of speech that he could follow. Mephistopheles advises the apprentice to be contented with magnificent words. In his very first monologue, however, Faust gives expression to his contempt for the science that is rooted exclusively in words and is not able to see, to perceive, to grasp. He wishes to appropriate unto himself All-Nature, not in lifeless words, but in living vision:

Schau alle Wirkungskraft und Samen,  
Und thu nicht mehr in Worten kramen.

When he dedicates himself to magic, his action is symbolic of the fact that he, dissatisfied with the scientifically fragmentary, wishes to become master of ingenious powers of perception. Goethe, as is now known, preserved until his very death a prejudice against empirical science that progresses by means of experiments. Because he himself saw at times into nature with the eye of clarified genius, he refused to admit that a Newton, with his calculations, could make any appreciable advance. Gradually, however, Goethe came to realize, as an investigator, the significance of self-conquest that merely means going forward, step by step, rejoicing in such progress as may be made, and seeing the whole in the slightest of all. At this early stage of his evolution, however, he is dissatisfied with anything less than a fundamental grasp of the cosmos.

As soon as Faust gazes at Nostradamus's, that

is, at Swedenborg's, mysterious book, he has one of those outbreaks on the whole and unity of nature in which the youthful poet's fantastic wisdom expresses itself in words that will never be forgotten:

Wie Alles sich zum Ganzen webt,  
Eins in dem Andern wirkt und lebt!  
Wie Himmelskräfte auf und nieder steigen  
Und sich die golden Eimer reichen!  
Mit segenduftenden Schwingen  
Vom Himmel durch die Erde dringen  
Harmonisch all' das All durchklingen!

Let no one be surprised at the rhyme, *steigen-reichen*. It owes its origin to Goethe's Frankfort way of pronouncing a "g." Thus he rhymes, also in *Faust*, Ach *neige-Du schmerzensreiche*, and *Tages-Sprache*, as in the famous lines:

Es sagen's aller Orten  
Alle Herzen unter dem himmlischen Tage,  
Jedes in seiner Sprache.

In his younger days, Goethe always wrote "g" for "ch" in the diminutive *chen*: *Gretgen*, *Mädchen*, *bissgen*.

It annoys us to see him eradicate all the traces of naïveté that give tone to the oldest *Faust* once he thinks of going to press. We have but to think of Gretchen's little monologue,

Wie konnt' ich sonst so tapfer schmälen  
Wenn thät ein Mäglein fehlen!

The vulgar *nit* has become *nicht*, and *nimmer* has been changed to *immer*, in the following verses:

Wie schien mir's schwarz und schwärzts noch gar,  
Mir's nimmer doch nit schwarz gnug war—

It is irritating too when we see the earlier lines of her monologue,

Ich schloss doch ganz gewiss den Schrein,  
Was Guckguck mag dadrinne sein?

being metamorphosed into the following more solemn and more nearly High German

Es ist doch wunderbar! Was mag wohl drinne sein?

As a young student in Leipzig, Goethe had seen Auerbach's cellar with the paintings that portray the expeditions and adventures of Faust and Mephistopheles. In Frankfort, where he had wavered between a pietistic belief in God under the influence of Fräulein von Klettenberg, and the infidelity of Enlightenment under the influence of Voltaire, he had steeped himself in alchemy and cabala; he had even tried his fortune with magic. But his stay in Strassburg was decisive. It was there that the suffering Herder gave him certain characteristics for his Faust. No one that he knew had investigated as had Herder; no one was such a genius; no one was so full of self-esteem; and Herder, with his never failing satire and repudiatory sarcasm, also gave him certain fundamental features of Mephistopheles, features that were later to be rounded out and determined through and by the impressions made on him by Merck. Friederike gave him the outstanding features of Gretchen, whose name he took from the little peasant girl whom he had loved in Frankfort when he was but fifteen years of age.

Unreservedly matchless is the art with which Goethe has portrayed the maidenly figure of Margarethe. First we have her famous refusal of Faust's

company, then Faust's almost reverential mood in her sleeping room, the picturesque monologue, *Willkommen süßer Dämmerschein*, which, by reason of the purity that characterizes her surroundings, prepares us for the purity and artlessness in the life of her soul. Attempts have been made to discover the models which inspired Goethe in the creation of this mood, in which he reconstructs from the frugal furnishings the nature of the possessor, just as in "A Thousand and One Nights" the wise men reconstruct the nature of those who have passed by a certain road from the footprints left behind. There is a poem by Georg Jacobi *An Belindens Bette*; there are two passages in Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*; there is the scene in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* where Jachimo enters the sleeping room of Imogene. But the scene in Goethe's *Faust* preserves its absolute originality and supplies the reader's fancy with the elements essential to the formation of a picture of Gretchen, which receives its first distinct outlines in the speech that moves us because of its very plainness, and in which this poor little girl of the humblest class depicts her life as it was and as it is. Her horizon is her mother's house and the garden of her neighbor, the woman across the way. One would not believe that such matter could be transformed into lofty poetry. Their household is quite small. They have no servants. Gretchen herself has to cook, sweep, knit, sew and run errands. There is no man in the family. Her mother is a widow, her brother is a soldier. There was once a little sister who is now dead and for whom Gretchen had to be the mother. The child was born just after the father's death, and her birth nearly

killed her mother. There the mother lay, recovered very slowly, and could not possibly nurse the child. Gretchen had all the work and care that arose from attending her entirely alone. The little thing looked upon her as her mother. She liked to lie sprawling in her lap. Gretchen kept her cradle standing by her bed. But she did not mind the trouble that arose from nursing her little sister, so dear was she to her. And then she died and Gretchen was left alone.

Everyone who has read the skillfully intertwined dialogue, in which the two couples are shifted in Marthe's garden so as to entertain each other, as in an antiphonal song, cannot help but sense the artistry with which the poet has the interest in Faust take root and grow in the young girl's heart, at the same time that Mephistopheles, conduct himself as he may, has a terrifying effect upon her. Ingenious too, because of its artlessness and simplicity, is the childlike trait revealed in Gretchen when she plucks the daisy and goes through her inimitable investigation: He loves me; he loves me not, until finally, in exceeding joy, she holds the last petal in her hand and says: He loves me.

Here, as in the catechization scene—a genuine pearl in itself—it is the interplay of the most elementary in the love of woman, as in the religion of woman, with the highest and most refined art that makes the elementary fully effective. Max Morris, one of the most deserving Goethe students of recent times, a scholar who enjoys an enviable ability to trace motifs and themes to their initial sources, has gone through everything that Goethe can have read, or must have read, during each stage of his life

when he was working on *Faust*, and he worked on it, as everyone knows, for over sixty years. As to the catechization scene, Morris has drawn attention to some expressions in Rousseau's *Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard*, in which the latter declines the attempt to penetrate the nature of God. Morris has also referred to a passage in Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*, which Goethe once corrected, and in which there are some observations regarding God that seem to anticipate Faust's confession in a quite remarkable way. But let anyone study for a moment Lavater's lax, loquacious, German prose:

Oder nenn's, beschreib's, wie du willst . . . Nenn's Innigkeit, Herzlichkeit, nenn's Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung . . . Religion, inneren Sinn, Gefühl für das Unsichtbare, Höhere, Uebermenschliche, Ueberirdische. . . . Religion. . . . lässt sich nicht lernen oder lehren . . . Die Göttlichkeit aller Dinge muss gefühlt werden.

Then think of these immortal verses, verses written for all time, beginning, *Mishör mich nicht, du holdes Angesicht!* They close as follows:

Erfüll davon dein Herz, so gross es ist,  
Und wenn du ganz in dem Gefühl selig bist,  
Nenn das dann wie du willst,  
Nenn's Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott!  
Ich habe keinen Namen  
Dafür. Gefühl ist alles,  
Name ist Schall und Rauch,  
Umnebelnd Himmelsglut.

A glance at Gretchen's heartfelt prayer, uttered before the devotional picture of the *Mater dolorosa* in a niche in the wall, shows that her religious inclination, however childlike it may be, is no less

deep than Faust's and hardly less independent of formulas. This prayer is all of one casting; it is all one gripping expression of spiritual distress; it is so simple in its structure and so replete with power and elementary innocence that it seems merely like the cry of a human heart. What can be more simple than this young girl's complaints? What can be more commonplace than her description of the way she waters the flowers in the window with her tears, those flowers which she plucked in the early morning and now offers to the Madonna? And yet there are, as careful investigators have shown, in these few dozen lines echoes from the Prophet Jeremiah, from the church hymn *Stabat Mater* written by a Mediaeval monk, Jacopone da Todi, from the pictures of Mary with the sword in her heart that belonged to the days of the Renaissance, and from Ossian's *Selma's Songs*. Once again we have the simplest and most elementary feeling expressed in a marvelous way after, and partly because of, having assimilated the art and poetry of many ages.

The estimable features in Faust's nature are emphasized by contrasting him with Wagner who, even in the old folk-book, is his famulus. But Goethe has personified that particular sort of scholarship which was the especial object of his hatred and contempt. In just a few strokes, Wagner is portrayed for time and eternity as the well behaved and inoffensive pedant. In the first place, he is sketched with a view to the prevailing tendencies of that time; for Wagner's weaknesses are those of Gottsched and the older generation against whom Herder, and the young men who followed him, took the field. Wagner admires a beautiful rhetoric; he sets great store

on the art of public speaking, just as Gottsched did. In opposition to him, Faust emphasizes the value of that eloquence which is the expression of sincerity. *Wenn Ihr's nicht fühlt, Ihr werdet's nicht erjagen.* Wagner studies history; he delights in steeping himself in old parchments. He labors under the naïve optimism of that time, which indeed flourishes to this very day, and receives, as a net result of its bizarre conceptions, the satisfaction that comes from feeling that great progress is being made: *Und wie wir's dann zuletzt so herrlich weit gebracht!* Wagner does not doubt but that by studying history he will come to know the heart and mind of man. Faust interjects his views on this subject. It is an answer written in lapidary style, and for all eternity, to the effect that the knowledge one derives while following the course of erudition gives the advocate an insight into a lumber-room and a trash-basket; and that knowledge of the real secrets of human life, far from rewarding, punish severely, and are punished:

Die wenigen, die was davon erkannt,  
Die thörig genug ihr volles Herz nicht wahrten,  
Dem Pöbel ihr Gefühl, ihr Schauen offenbarten,  
Hat man von je gekreuzigt und verbrannt.

Wagner, who immediately after the disappearance of the Earth Spirit, enters in sleeping-gown and night-cap, reminds of Wieland who likewise appears, in the farce, in his night-cap with the shades and spirits of the lower world.

The war, which the young poet in the first dialogue between Faust and Wagner wages against the academic science of his time, is continued in another

form in the conversation between Mephistopheles and the student. Quite significant for Goethe's fondness for hoaxes and disguises is the fact that Mephistopheles appears as Faust, and plays the disguised rôle of Faust, at the very first meeting.

In this oldest draft prepared for the stage (1774), the scene is full of the poet's personal reminiscences of the University of Leipzig; they were later deleted on the ground that they were too local, and consequently too unimportant. We have remarks on the uncleanliness of students' rooms, on the inn where the beautiful girl waits on the table, on the monotonous food in the boarding houses which reminded so little of home, on rancid butter, and on the everlasting mutton and veal.

In the student's scene of the *Urfaust*, we miss the judgment passed on the faculty of theology; nor does it contain the immortal expression regarding the faculty of law: *Es erben sich Gesetz und Rechte, wie eine ew'ge Krankheit fort.* But the two inimitable characterizations of the faculties of medicine and philosophy are found even here. The remarks on the art of the medical fraternity are admirable because of Mephistopheles's audacious, cynical wit, which quite precipitously breaks through the paternal tone he has assumed thus far. It is, however, the serious and fearfully scornful criticism that is leveled at formal logic which arouses our keenest interest. For young Goethe, without either knowing it or wishing it, describes, through the implication embedded in the contrast, the method by which his own intellect grasps, his own mind creates: Not analytically, but synthetically—precisely as did Bonaparte's twenty years later.

Deep indeed is his hatred of formal logic—a hatred with which Hegel was soon to agree and outdo—as expressed in the lines:

Dann lehrt man Euch manchen Tag  
Dass, was Ihr sonst auf einen Schlag  
Getrieben, wie Essen und Trinken frei,  
Eins! Zwei! Drei! dazu nöthig sei.

Even more significant is the imaginative depiction of ingenious reason's all-controlling talent:

Zwar ist's mit der Gadankenfabrik  
Wie mit einem Webermeisterstück,  
Wie ein Tritt tausend Fäden regt,  
Die Schifflein herüber, hinüber schiessen,  
Die Fäden ungesehen fliessen,  
Ein Schlag tausend Verbindungen schlägt.

It should be quite impossible for anyone who has ever read these lines just once, and who has understood them, ever to forget them. They were written by a youth of twenty-five summers. The sagacity lodged in them is uncommon; but the lack of years on the part of their author is more than uncommon.

Young as the poet is, it never occurs to him that his Faust should need rejuvenation. For his Faust is as young and as eager for life as his creator. The Goethe of twenty-five summers could not fancy such a thing as an impulse or a yearning to be made young again. But as the reading world of today becomes acquainted with *Faust*, it is wont to picture the leading character as a venerable scholar who is eventually transformed by sorcery. The scene in the Witches' Kitchen, however, in which Faust reverts

to youth, Goethe wrote in 1788, while he was in Italy, obviously impressed at the time by his own rejuvenation, both as a man and an artist, the rejuvenation to which the Goethe of thirty-nine winters happily fell heir while living under the beneficent influence of a southern sun. This kind of rejuvenation must of course be regarded as symbolic of the innate ability genius has to undergo this process; to do just this thing. "Such prominent men," said Goethe to Eckermann on March 11, 1828, "are what we would call 'ingenious natures!' . . . They experience a second puberty. This explains the fact that in the case of specially endowed men we observe certain unusually fresh, vigorous, fertile periods in their old age. They seem to undergo a sort of temporary rejuvenation." But the rejuvenation, as we see, lay nevertheless quite apart from the original plan of the work.

In the completed drama there is, unfortunately, a bewildering mixture of the old and the new. We are reminded, for example, of the remarkable scene entitled *Wald und Höhle* which opens with Faust's gratitude to the Earth Spirit for having given him everything for which he had asked. The monologue gives expression to calm and restrained power, peace of soul, serenity of mind, great joy in life, and exalted study of nature. The reader is consequently surprised when, at the close of the scene, Faust, in despair, calls himself a fugitive, a man without a home, a monster without rest or peace of soul—precisely as Werther refers to himself as a wanderer over the earth. These are the words, this is the mood, of the man who has just thanked the Earth Spirit for having given him the whole of

this earth as his kingdom, and invested him with absolute power to understand it and enjoy it.

The close of the scene belongs to the *Urfaust* (1774), written when Goethe, in the demoniac unrest of youth, after his break with Friederike, after his flight from Charlotte, after the dissolution of his relation to Lili, quite unable to find peace either of mind or body, pained by the loss he felt, pained even more by the loss he caused, equally dissatisfied in his yearning after world-embracing knowledge and his craving for divine creative power—when Goethe felt that he was a man without a home, a fury-lashed mortal. The beginning of the scene was written fully fourteen years later, in the charming garden of the Villa Borghese where Goethe for the first time in his life felt completely happy, and when it seemed to him that the spirits had given him all that mortal man could wish to have with impunity.

It was to be sure not very long ago that we first became acquainted with the *Faust* which Goethe wrote about the year 1775. It was unearthed by Erich Schmidt in 1887. He found, in Weimar, in a quarto volume, which contained quite a number of other things, the copy that had been made by that stout-hearted and intelligent lady at the court, Fräulein von Göchhausen.

This *Faust* has a tremendous advantage over the other so far as the conclusion is concerned. It was written in a uniform style and needs for its completion nothing but the scene of Valentine's death. If it had this, it would constitute a fully explicable and rounded-out whole in which everything is at once necessary from the point of view of logic, and

capital in quality. There is nothing whatsoever in it that causes the least racking of the brain. It could be understood by readers in almost any stage of development—and could be placed in the hands of anyone for a few pennies. What was later added, partly as introduction, partly as interpolation, is mostly of very high rank, sublime or profound or impertinent, but in style, and frequently in spirit, neither in the same tone nor along the same line as the original nucleus of the great poem.

Heretofore, Goethe had imitated Shakespeare. With the *Urfaust* he stands out all of a sudden as Shakespeare's equal. The figures he created in this instance are in no way inferior to the greatest of all ages. Homer, to be sure, gave us Achilles and Ulysses, Penelope and Nausikaa; Cervantes gave us Don Quixote and Sancho Pansa, Shakespeare Falstaff and Hamlet, Molière Tartuff and the Misanthrope, Holberg Erasmus Montanus and Peer Degrn. In *Faust* Goethe has created characters which in clarity and symbolic worth are quite the equal of any of these. With Faust, Wagner, Mephistopheles, and Gretchen he stood, when twenty-six years of age, on a spiritual level with the most renowned poets Europe had ever known.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ARRIVAL AND RECEPTION IN WEIMAR— KARL AUGUST

AFTER Karl August's engagement to Princess Luise had been solemnized in Karlsruhe, the two Princes and their tutor continued their journey to Paris by way of Strassburg. Though Karl August was subject at all times to the closest custody, he entered into such an intimate relationship with Jeanette Brossard that he assured her an annuity of five hundred francs for the rest of her life.

Having assumed the leadership of the government in the fall of 1775, the Duke returned to Karlsruhe in order to marry his fiancée. At the two meetings with Goethe—one on the journey thither, one on the return—the intended visit to Weimar was discussed in great detail. Goethe was to be called for in a carriage; but the carriage did not arrive. Councillor von Kalb, who had waited for it week after week in Karlsruhe, returned to Frankfort by way of Mannheim.

On his arrival there, however, Goethe was not to be found: he had already waited in vain far too long. In the middle of October he wrote to Knebel:

Your young ducal pair requested that I should accompany them to Weimar. I made my arrangements, packed my trunk, put on my travelling suit, said good-bye, and then sat and waited. Why—I do not know. Kalb, to whom I was referred, failed to come. But I would have gone on any

way alone had it not been too dangerous in the present condition of the roads and the weather.

At last Goethe allowed himself to be persuaded by his father, who as an old republican cherished a profound dislike to princes and the servants of princes, that the Duke of Weimar had been playing a joke on him and had now forgotten him. He then decamped and started on his way to Italy, a journey he had so long wished to undertake. In Heidelberg his patroness, Demoiselle Delf, had made plans to have him appointed at the Electoral Court in Mannheim. But here he was overtaken by the estafette. The carriage had come.

On November 7, 1775, Goethe entered Weimar. No one knew that it was Helios that had come. But they all feared the favorite.

It was impossible to take him from his hotel in a court carriage as was the custom on the arrival of guests of ducal blood. As a plain citizen he was excluded from this honor. Nor could he as a plain citizen eat his first meals at the ducal table. This etiquette was changed, however, as quickly as possible.

Goethe was to be sure not ennobled by the Emperor until April, 1782. But as early as June 11, 1776, he received by ducal appointment a seat and a vote in the *Conseil* with the title of *Geheimer Legationsrat* and a salary of 1200 thalers a year. Moreover, he was presented with the park house, which became his favorite place of abode and which everyone who goes to Weimar visits again and again. But it was seven months after Goethe's arrival before he secured this fixed position.

He owned nothing. At the moment he gave up

his law practice in Frankfort he became dependent upon the good will of his father. As late as March 1776 he begs Johanna Fahlmer from Weimar to speak a good word for him with his father so that he can get a suit of clothes and a little money. He is helped out of his worst need when the Duke makes him a present of a hundred ducats. But he must have more; he must have clothes; and among other things he must have shirts and pretty good ones too. His mother would gladly have sent anything she had to her pet (*Hätschelhans*, which she always calls him, a name which the Duchess Anna Amalie adopts in the letters to his mother), but his father steadfastly refuses to send any money to Weimar, fearing that he could not in that way induce the son to come back to Frankfort.

The venerable and high-principled but narrow-minded Baron J. F. von Fritsch, Anna Amalie's confidential agent, was grievously disconcerted by the unescapable presence of this favorite, chosen from the ordinary class of mortal men. The young Duke had already been acting as though he were going to institute radical changes in the established form of government, and now he has called in as a friend and older adviser a young man who is nominally a lawyer but actually a poet who has written, among other odd things, a smart novel that treats of hopeless infatuation for a woman already legitimately attached, and which dilates at great length on suicide, just as though both of these were entirely permissible.

The Duchess Luise shed many a tear, in silence of course, over the new-comer. It was most assuredly interesting to hear him read from his manu-

scripts; but Luise had an emotional heart, while Karl August, who had married her as a matter of duty, who did not love her, who loved but little and but few round about him, went dashing away on the chase on every possible occasion and passionately resigned himself to his chief and favorite amusement, rapid riding interspersed with hurdling. And now, to pile Pelion on Ossa, he has taken unto himself a friend who is a wild genius, who does not belong to her social class, and who is hopelessly disrespectful to the customs of society in general. There was no doubt in her mind but that this individual would take genuine pleasure in beguiling her young husband into new sorts of wildness, new types of folly, new moments of infidelity.

Little did she know that, quite to the contrary, Goethe felt from the very first that he was her cavalier. He immediately endeavored to instill measure and moderation into her young lord, and to be unreservedly kind toward and considerate of her. He was captivated by the young Princess at the very first sight; and his natural refinement of feeling, his wholesome disposition, to say nothing of his ingenious cleverness, could not help but bring about a good understanding wherever this was humanly possible.

Goethe soon incurred the ill will of the ecclesiastical fraternity. For the past five years the position of Senior Court Preacher and General Superintendent (the fearful title bequeathed by the Reformation for plain Bishop) had been vacant. Since the Duke was tired of the gloomy, shallow Weimar clergy, who had nevertheless been urged for the position, he requested Goethe to recommend a suit-

able man for the place. Goethe's thoughts at once turned to Herder, his old friend and teacher, now eking out an unenviable existence as a minister in Bückeburg. He wished to repay Herder for the good he had received from him and was quite willing to disregard his irritable temperament. He even felt that real joy could arise from having this irritable person as a daily associate. The clergy of Weimar rose as one man in opposition to the appointment. A violent counter agitation was launched. Goethe was eventually compelled to inform the consistory that the appointment of Herder was in accord with the Duke's express desire. The consent of the consistory was in this way forced, but was invalid until the Town Council had officially nominated Herder. On May 2, 1776, the Duke requested the senior of the consistory to send him the decree of appointment so that he might sign it. And still there was delay. The matter was dragged out until June. The Town Council, acting not entirely on its own initiative, held the appointment up as long as possible.

Hardly had the report been spread that Goethe was in Weimar and that he was having an influence on the reigning Duke when his former friends, madcaps from the days of *Sturm und Drang*, felt something like an electric shock. The friend, the comrade, they said, had been preferred. He must do something for them; he must lead them into green pastures. It was not long until he had first this one and then that one at his home in Weimar as uninvited guests.

Lenz was among the first to arrive. His coming was a genuine misfortune for Goethe. He was so

impecunious when he came that the Duke had to pay his hotel bill. He insinuated himself, as we have seen, wherever he went, could not and would not hold his tongue, started a scandal and had to be removed. Herder, who had finally been appointed, brought him the order of expulsion and sufficient money to pay his way out of town. Goethe had asked for the order and Chamberlain Einsiedel had drawn it up. And this was one of Goethe's friends!

Even before Lenz had gone Klinger came on from Giessen, three months before he was to take his examination in law, and asked for an appointment on Goethe's recommendation. He "wished to leave his conscience in silence and give himself up entirely to the ebb and flow of fate and the enjoyment of sensual pleasures." He stopped at the hotel where Lenz was living, "Der Elefant." There the three poets found each other, Wieland and Lenz and Klinger. In Goethe's garden Klinger struck up an acquaintance with Prince Konstantin and clung to him. He writes: "At his home I can eat when I want to." He drank so much with the young man that the Prince became ill. In need of money, Klinger had his belongings in Giessen sold. But when he embarked on a mad love affair with a girl in Weimar the same time that he had another in Gotha, he left.

While Lenz was still there the composer Philip Christoph Kayser wanted to come on from Zürich! Goethe had to write and ask him to please stay where he was: "I have you in my heart at all times. Send me something frequently. Please stay in Zürich! If you can be quiet I will help you."

Klinger returns and with him a charlatan by the

name of Christoph Kauffmann, one of Lavater's apostles of *Kraft*. Kauffmann had invented the name of *Sturm und Drang* for Klinger's drama, which originally was called, significantly enough, *Wirrwarr*. Twenty-six years old in 1775, he had come to Zürich from Strassburg where he had been an apothecary's apprentice. He had a long flowing mane of hair and a long beard, his entire breast was bare, he wore green russet trousers and green or red russet waistcoats. He wandered on foot with a great knotty stick in his hand and a cap of liberty on his head, fully convinced of his ability to reform and transform the universe. He called himself God's lime-hound, for he was certain that his way was God's way. He was a free mason and wished to establish educational institutions. He introduced himself at the Weimar Court in the costume above described, enraptured Caroline Herder, calumniated everybody in Weimar, so that scenes arose that necessitated his removal from the town. And this was one of Goethe's friends!

The climax of misfortune was capped when, in the beginning of the year 1776, the Duke, despite Goethe's constant appeals, somewhat indisposed as he was, undertook a forced ride from Gotha to Erfurt and back without stopping. Goethe was so vexed that he refused to dine with Karl August on his return and became so ill from sheer vexation that he was obliged to abandon a journey he had planned to Leipzig. His fears with regard to the Duke's health were entirely justified. Karl August was attacked with rheumatic pains that continued for more than a month and threatened to become chronic.

At this juncture Goethe's opponents in Weimar rose as one man against him. The poet from Frankfort was leading the Duke astray. Rescue was possible only in case he could be induced to go somewhere else. But to the dismay of the faithful, the report was spread that his stay was no longer intended as a mere visit; Karl August was planning to have him remain permanently and become his guide, councillor and friend. Nor was this all; the intruder from another town is to be given a place in the cabinet; he is to be made Minister, perhaps even Prime Minister. The plebeian adventurer is to rule them all.

Fritsch declares that he cannot sit in a council of which Dr. Goethe is a member. As God and all the world know, Dr. Goethe is incapable of doing responsible work. His appointment would be taken amiss by everyone. In case Dr. Goethe, as Fritsch liked to believe, really feels a sincere attachment for the Duke, he himself will renounce the honor that is being planned for him. He, Prime Minister that he is, must in any event send in his resignation. It was Anna Amalie's intervention that saved the day.

At this point Klopstock, Germany's super-moralist, took an active interest in the situation. On the basis of floating rumors and strong calumnias, he preferred all manner of charges against Goethe. The giddy seducer is ruining a young Prince "who was destined to the performance of virtuous deeds that will bring good fortune to his people." He claimed that Fritz Stolberg would decline the position in the council to which he had been appointed in case the people continued to live at the Court as

they had been living, in case Goethe made Karl August "drink until he was sick." Nor would the Duke live much longer. And he really persuaded Stolberg to decline the appointment which he had even sought so soon as his arrival was fixed. Klopstock held Goethe responsible for the sorrows of Duchess Luise. He let the Stolbergs know that people in Weimar were drinking cognac from beer glasses, and that the Duke and Goethe had common mistresses. Goethe could, if he wished, show the Duke his letter. He even spread this about in all sorts of copies. He felt that he was a consecrated being. In the eyes of the older generation he was the sovereign lord of literature. As the poet of the *Messiah* he was placed as far above Homer as one placed Christianity above Paganism; his odes were regarded as superior to anything that German literature had produced. An attack from him was a blow that went home.

Goethe replied to Klopstock with cold courtesy, and defiant repudiation. Klopstock wrote: "Now I despise Goethe."

From this first experience it was made difficult for the poet to come into a natural and worthy relation to the Prince. It is not hard to see, however, what drew the two young men together.

So far as the Duke was concerned, it was the longing of a young man for independence. He had always had his mother watching over him, a mother jealous of her power, who had even stretched this power farther than was justifiable. He had always had a tutor at his heels. Hardly had he grown up when they gave him a wife that he had absolutely never desired. Now he felt: At last I shall breathe

freely, I shall live! And just at this time he meets this young celebrity whose slogan is nature against custom, whose very joy of life is freedom, whose Georg dies "defending his freedom like a lion," whose Götz dies exclaiming "Freedom, freedom!" Even as a young, plain citizen's son he is filled with the power and joy of life. What a friend, what a teacher for a young man who had so recently been a boy! He knows life, has already loved, suffered, and written books of which Germany is talking, books which the young admire, which the old condemn, or in which they, despite their dissatisfaction with the content, honor the genius. For Karl August he is the road to a rich and free life.

For Goethe the attraction was no less strong. For him the meeting with Karl August was a way out, a liberation.

He had become anchored. He had been a lawyer in his paternal city, had a large practice for a young man, a practice in which his father went through all the documents for him and with him. But he approached this business with secret despair. He did not wish to become a lawyer. And Frankfort was a little world in itself, difficult to enter, and next to impossible, for him, to leave. The wall that surrounded the city surrounded him too. Distances were at that time enormous. From Frankfort-on-the-Main to Berlin was then a longer journey than it is now from Copenhagen to New York. His fate seemed determined. If he went his way as a lawyer he would become a husband, an official, a local celebrity in the old Imperial City. But after his engagement to Lili Schönemann had been publicly entered upon, after the preparations for the

wedding had been made and the engagement had nevertheless been broken, his life in Frankfort had become impossible. He would meet Lili's relatives everywhere; and the disapproval of what had taken place would be equally ubiquitous. He had to get out of this enclosure, away from this future, away from this dependence upon everything and everybody.

Then it was that the heir presumptive at Weimar reached forth his hand. Goethe seized it and held it fast, and with this handshake he received fifty-six years of care-free life. As to what and who he really was, this twenty-six-year-old *Geheimer Legationsrat* was not himself especially clear. He was an individual who was not particular about understanding himself. The old rule ran: Know thyself! He felt no urgent desire to know himself, for he felt profoundly that the unknown was the sum total of his being, the source of his strength. What one really was, that one learned soon enough and fully enough from others. He strove at the same time for clarity as a judge of men, as an investigator, and then as a scientist and a statesman on a small scale. He was alternately a youth who let himself drift along with the current, and a man with rich experience back of him; he was a plant-like, a growing, developing nature. And he was a mind—a mind that controls, and controls itself.

He stood at the cross-roads of life: let it break or bear! *Bricht's auch, bricht's nicht mit mir!* The poem entitled *Seefahrt* was written during the days in which he had entered upon his new destination, September 11, 1776. He portrays in it the ship as it lies in the harbor waiting for a favorable wind,

then the journey itself during which a violent storm breaks out, and closes with the following verses:

Doch er stehet männlich an dem Steuer;  
Mit dem Schiffe spielen Wind und Wellen,  
Wind und Wellen nicht mit seinem Herzen;  
Herrschend blickt er auf die grimme Tiefe  
Und vertrauet, scheiternd oder landend,  
Seinen Göttern.

In reality, he had brought his ship into the harbor; into a safe little harbor where he was secure against storm and against stranding.

## II

A state in miniature; it was about the size of that of an English lord; a small prince but a real man; a little town and a little court; about twenty associates. Such was the inventory of his fortune. But he was offered a field of activity and possibilities for development. This was Goethe's opportunity. Neither he nor his contemporaries had a clear idea of the smallness of the state or the insignificance of the material situation: Anna Amalie's income for the year 1776 was 30,783 talers and 16 groschen; her expenditures were 28,982 talers and 21 groschen.

It makes but little difference for our purpose whether the state and the court were large or small; the important thing is that the poet had been promoted; he had been made finer; he had been lifted up into a higher circle than the one to which he originally belonged. People did not ask themselves, he

did not ask himself, whether this transplanting gave favorable soil for the protection and growth of his powers of poetic production. He himself saw in the change a renovation of his condition, an appeal to his many slumbering talents and capabilities.

It does no good whatsoever to reason about fate in this case. It was to be this way simply because it was this way. But we see that Goethe's poetic vein practically dries up during his first ten years (1775-1785) in Weimar. He produces just about nothing: a few literary satires of slight value, *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*, *Neuestes aus Plundersweilern*, an adaptation of Aristophanes's *Vögel* (1777, 1780), small topical dramas such as *Lila* (1776), or *Die Fischerin* (1778), and the drama *Elpenor* (1781-83), which remained a fragment, the little drama *Die Geschwister* (1776)—all works that have psychological and historical interest, but all of which could have remained unwritten and Goethe's renown would not have been one whit inferior on that account. The valuable works which he planned during this period, received, without exception, their final form much later. There is *Egmont*, begun in truth back in Frankfort in 1775 and not finished until 1787. There is *Iphigenie*, written in prose in 1779, but completely recast in 1786. And there is *Tasso*, likewise written first in prose, in 1780, and then transformed into the drama that we know, with its monumental verses, in the year 1789.

It cannot be denied that if we except individual lyric poems, few in number but of the highest rank, Goethe's first decade in Weimar was a desert so far as poetry is concerned.

The winter and spring months were completely taken up with various sorts of amusements, vigorous skating among other things, a pleasure novel to Weimar's narrow-minded society and therefore highly scandalized. Then there were various banquets, hunting parties, balls and festivities, all manner of lighter and more enduring love affairs. Aristocratic society in the decade immediately preceding the French Revolution did not take marital morality any too seriously in little Weimar any more than in other centres of culture. Morals were in general freer than they became in the nineteenth century. Some of the New Year verses which Goethe himself wrote at the change of years give us an idea of the ethical situation. There are, for example, these lines in a poem to Frau von Lichtenberg:

Mit gutem Appetit geniessen,  
Vom Morgen bis zum Abend küssen  
Und fest sich an den Schnurrbart schliessen,  
Kann lange Nächte leicht versüßen.

We do not know to whom Goethe's flickering heart first became attached on his arrival in Weimar. When, in 1778, he succeeded in bringing to the city of his adoption that rare beauty and renowned artist, Korona Schröter, who became Duchess Anna Amalies' Court and Chamber Singer, he felt strongly attached to her and was with her daily. She was the first to sing *Erlkönig*, the first to play *Iphigenie*. In 1786 she published in Weimar a pamphlet of twenty-five songs that she had set to music.

Goethe glorifies her with marked warmth in the

lines he dedicated to her in that diverting poem entitled *Auf Miedings Tod* (1782) :

Ihr Freunde, Platz! Weicht einen kleinen Schritt!  
Seht, wer da kommt und festlich näher tritt!  
Sie ist es selbst, die Gute fehlt uns nie;  
Wir sind erhört; die Musen senden sie.  
Ihr kennt sie wohl; sie ist's, die stets gefällt;  
Als eine Blume zeigt sie sich der Welt:  
Zum Muster wuchs das schöne Bild empor,  
Vollendet nun, sie ist's und stellt es vor.  
Es gönnten ihr die Musen jede Gunst,  
Und bie Natur erschuf in ihr die Kunst,  
So häuft sie willig jeden Reiz auf sich,  
Und selbst dein Name ziert, *Korona*, Dich.

The young Duke was even more inconstant than Goethe. The lady, however, Caroline Jagemann, actress by profession, who later became the Duke's *maitresse en titre*, and who, as such, was ennobled and made the possessor of an estate under the name of Frau von Heygendorf, was not born at the time of our poet's arrival in Weimar. Inconstant or not, Goethe himself soon overcame his madness for pleasure and began the work that at once consumed his time and concentrated his attention.

He had never felt that he was only a poet. Indeed throughout his entire life he had such a pronounced penchant for the plastic arts that it was only natural for him to spend years, all told, in developing himself along these lines. Though he never became more than a dilettant he found it at all times impossible to rest until he had seen what he could accomplish in a given line.

From his father he had inherited, first of all, the passion for making collections; it was a passion that

never forsook him just as he in turn never abandoned it. He imparted it in truth to the Duke who, following his example, made a serious study of the natural sciences and planned scientific and art collections. Goethe became, as the years went on, a naturalist of note.

There was also a decidedly practical turn to his mind. Having entered the Cabinet, he became a Minister with all his heart and soul. Every detail of the administration attracted him. He interested himself in all phases of administrative affairs with the result that he soon had the leading public interests under his immediate and personal control. He was made chairman of the committee on public highway, on public buildings, on the conservation of forests, and on the working of the mines. As a member of the war commission he found himself obliged to waste much invaluable time. During Frederick the Great's entanglement with the campaigns of Austria, a Prussian general set out (1779) to draft troops from the Weimarian provinces. His act was one of usurpation. Goethe prevented trouble by taking personal charge of the levying of the recruits. Quite contrary to his wish, Karl August entered into the Princes' alliance against Austria. Weimar's military contingent, however, was negligible: The cavalry never consisted of more than a few hundred dragoons with uniforms and spurs—but without horses.

The government of this diminutive country—only a few hundred square miles in area—was naturally patriarchal. It was consequently, as Goethe's youthfulness prompted him to see things, his duty to be present at every fire in the neighborhood. He led

the hook and ladder company; he presided at the meetings. And what lay nearer his heart and consumed for a long while his best strength, was the theatre of which he was director for more than a quarter of a century.

The new arrival was well received by Wieland who, because of his great and amiable talents, his good humor, his unenvious disposition, and his store of shrewdness with regard to actual life, had the fundamental prerequisites for what the English call "good company." In Herder, whom he himself had brought to Weimar, he had an intimate friend and an artistic adviser right by his side until Herder's jealousy of Goethe's friendship with Schiller and an ever increasing tendency to moralizing, destroyed the critical judgment of the Senior Court Preacher. Knebel has already been discussed. Among the courtiers there were Siegmund v. Seckendorff and Friedrich von Einsiedel, both amiable men. Among the officials there were K. A. Musäus already famous as the collector and publisher of the *Volksmärchen der Deutschen*, and F. J. Bertuch, promoter of finance and industry, all interesting personalities. There was, too, the Court Lady, the slightly deformed Luise von Göchhausen with a good head always full of merry conceits.

Despite his ability to appraise Goethe as a man, the Duke had very little appreciation for his poetry. His taste was French. One sees that his enthusiasm for *Egmont* when the drama was sent him was tepid. He would have preferred a tragedy of the orthodox French type. But as a personality he had a beneficent effect upon Goethe and Goethe upon him. The

cleverest and most beautiful testimony of their mutually happy relation is the poem *Ilemnau*, written for Karl August's birthday, September 3, 1783. It portrays a bivouac on the chase. The neighborhood around Ilemnau had been the object of Goethe's especial care. The population was pitifully impoverished. The mines in Ilemnau had been lying idle for a long while. Goethe had had everything improved; the mines were reopened in 1784 and again worked, though without results.

We have a description of the nocturnal gipsy camp which the young court people constitute. The Duke is sleeping in a hut; everybody speaks in a whisper so as not to disturb the young lord's rest. With distinctly valorous frankness Goethe mentions here the mistakes of the Duke and the anxiety that is caused by his lack of restraint. He broods over his own lot and part in the Duke's follies. I myself, he says, brought pure fire from the altar of liberty; but the flame that I started was not pure. Unwisely I sang of courage and liberty, and again of honesty and liberty that knows no restraint (*Götz* and *Werther*). Now I sit here and feel guilty and yet happy, innocent and yet punished.

At the close of the poem he expresses his joy at the wholesome potentialities in Karl August's soul:

Doch rede sacht! Denn unter diesem Dach  
Ruht all mein Wohl und all mein Ungemach:  
Ein edles Herz, vom Wege der Natur  
Durch enges Schicksal abgeleitet,  
Das, ahnungsvoll, nur auf der rechten Spur  
Bald mit sich selbst und bald mit Zauberschatten streitet,  
Und, was ihm das Geschick durch die Geburt geschenkt,  
Mit Müh und Schweiß erst zu erringen denkt.

Goethe does not conceal the fact that they are still a long distance from the goal:

Gewiss, ihm geben auch die Jahre  
Die rechte Richtung seiner Kraft.  
Noch ist, bei tiefer Neigung für das Wahre,  
Ihm Irrthum eine Leidenschaft.

But the longer he broods over Karl August the safer he feels with regard to the future. The Duke is developing more and more happily and, in deep appreciation of his position, has restrained his liberty. He who wishes to rule and guide others must impose upon himself a great many privations:

Der kann sich manchen Wunsch gewähren,  
Der kalt sich selbst und seinem Willen lebt;  
Allein, wer Andre wohl zu leiten strebt,  
Muss fähig sein, viel zu entbehren.

The self-control which Goethe thus brought close to the heart of the youthful ruler and disciple he eventually made into a law for himself. The attempt to canalize his passions constitutes an essential part of his own self-development. His case was not entirely unique: To a certain extent all men pass through a stage of development as a result of which they are gradually but surely changed, even completely transformed. But the majority of men merely become less pliant and pliable and in the end dry up, or they are at least rigorously toned down. Goethe's external metamorphosis is well known: The young man who had worn his heart on his sleeve, who had given the name of brother to every acquaintance of the same age or a little older, who had been on terms of *Du auf Du* with every

comrade, accessible to all, frank and open, effusively communicative to people whom he had never seen and never did see—Auguste von Stolberg, among others—became now as cold as he had been warm, as inflexible as he had been volatile, as secretive as he had formerly been loquacious.

This took place after the friends of his younger days began to pour into Weimar in order to use him; long after it had become clear to him that he was at present regarded merely as an object to be exploited, and was to be regarded in this light the rest of his natural days. The relation to an intractable but well-bred young Prince who made his future secure, who placed him at the head of a diminutive government, who permitted him to do good and to disseminate human happiness wherever there was a field for such effort, could not help but have an influence on the poet's violent impulse to freedom, an impulse that he had brought with him from the days of less restraint. And like a genuine German, Wolfgang Goethe had deep down in his heart a desire to serve.

In *Tasso* the Princess advises the Poet to entrust himself to her brother. Tasso's reply was undoubtedly an expression of the feeling that became Goethe's own a short while after his arrival in Weimar. Tasso says:

He is my Prince! But do not fancy that the wild impulse to freedom puffs up the soul within me. Man is not born to be free; and for the man of noble parts there is no fairer fate than to obey a Prince whom one honors.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CHARLOTTE VON STEIN—*Die Geschwister*—FRAU VON STEIN'S BREAK WITH GOETHE—CHAR- LOTTE VON STEIN'S *Dido*

GOETHE met Charlotte von Stein, *née* Schardt, in November, 1775. He was then twenty-six years old. She, born on Christmas Day 1742, was almost thirty-three. Since May, 1764, she had been married to the inoffensive, though far from prominent, Master of Horse at the Court of Weimar. She had given birth to seven children, only three of whom were still living. She had the characteristics of a distinguished aristocratic lady: Naturalness and easiness, eagerness to learn, sympathies without enthusiasm, frankness and tact, and according to the claim of those who knew her, an exceedingly attractive physiognomy without being really beautiful, the fundamental trait of which was a sort of gentle seriousness. It is now impossible to pass judgment on her appearance since the four pictures of her that are preserved in Weimar, her self-portrait, the two paintings by Imhof and Meyer, and a miniature portrait in enamel by an unknown artist, are as unlike as they would be if they represented four different women. As a lady of the world and a lady of the court, she had the charm that comes from being perfectly at ease under any and all circumstances. She was naturally very superior in dignity and bear-

ing to the young genius from Frankfort. Just after his break with his fiancée, Goethe was racked and restless. He was causing unhappiness wherever he went, wherever he went he was filling hearts with trouble. He felt as though he were being pursued, he was often in the mood to which he had given expression when he put the words on Faust's lips: *Bin ich der Flüchtlings nicht, der Unbehauste!* In her presence there was peace. She straightened everything out, toned everything down, became his soother, his angel, his guardian spirit, a sort of loftier sister. He wished that his sister might have a brother as he had a sister in Charlotte. Infatuated as he soon became, he transformed her in his poems to the sort of being he needed. She became the priestess of his soul and in his thoughts, possibly also in reality, he cast himself down at her feet just as the persecuted of old were wont to throw themselves at the foot of the altar and pray for love and peace.

Thus she becomes Iphigenie in Tauris, the Priestess. He is Orestes, the brother persecuted by the furies. In one of Goethe's most beautiful poems to her there are the lines:

Denn Du warst in abgelebten Zeiten  
Meine Schwester oder meine Frau.

Her charming presence, when he finds her or refinds her—for in remote times she was his—calms and appeases his soul; it reconciles him to fate; and it reconciles him with himself.

In the course of years he again personified himself, in another way in this material. He himself became Iphigenie. All the circumstances that later

bore down upon him in Weimar, such as loss of time in the levying of recruits and the assessment of taxes, the neglect of his calling, the fact that he was not writing poetry, Karl August's lack of appreciation of his nature, and last of all his longing to get away from the gray sky of Weimar to Italy's mild climate, where he was about to go when the carriage overtook him that brought him to Thuringia—all of this becomes the oppression that weighs down upon the Priestess. Iphigenie's longing for Hellas and her yearning to escape from the Kingdom of the Scythians, becomes Goethe's longing to escape from the cold, raw air of North Germany and betake himself to the sun of sunny Italy. The King who loves and admires and binds Iphigenie, this impetuous and powerful King who is always on the point of becoming distinctly rude, ruler of the Barbarians that he is, but who is good at heart and in whom the finer feelings can be evoked—that is Karl August in his relation to Goethe.

The first sketch of the drama is finished in Italy. Goethe feels an aversion to its lack of style; he revises it again and again. In its fourth form the work approaches a matchless tenderness in tone and feeling. It has received the stamp of human nature in its most refined nobility; it has become the most inspired of the larger productions that Goethe has created, a living monument, a tree of melancholy planted on some of the tenderest feelings and strongest, stillest moods in his life.

It is possible that his portrayal was indebted to Frau von Stein for these enduring merits. The individual of today who studies her nature as it is revealed to us in her letters and poetic attempts knows

full well how little she actually corresponded to the Frau von Stein that Goethe pictured to himself.

But even such a contemporary as Karl August was entirely aware of this discrepancy. As an old man (May 27, 1828), while rehearsing with Chancellor F. von Müller a thousand memories from those earlier days, remarked: Goethe always idealized his women one way or another; he loved his own conceits in them; he did not really feel any pronounced passion. His most lasting flame, Frau von Stein, was a rather good woman but by no means a great light.

Of those particular women who have been immortalized by reason of their relation to Goethe, no one of them had so much significance for him as did Charlotte von Stein. He spent fourteen years of his life in the utmost intimacy with her; and of these the first twelve were spent under her actual dominion. We find him during these years—from his arrival in Weimar to his departure for Italy—dissipating, as her admirer, disciple, friend, lover and poet, his robust and vigorous creative ability, though he does develop a certain finesse and strength in finesse, an exaltedness and sureness which he fondly imagined he owed to her, but which she herself possessed absolutely not at all.

What he did owe to her was the impression of this exaltedness and sureness. Being a blue blood herself, she was in a position to communicate to him, patrician bourgeois, bourgeois patrician that he was, a quite superior knowledge of the world as well as an aristocratic tone and bearing that can be acquired only with extreme difficulty. As her pupil, Goethe took his obligations at the provincial Weimar

Court so seriously that he squandered his real powers in writing festival plays and poetic divertissements for the entertainment of the court circle. His real poetry during this first period lies in the misty dew-drops sprinkled throughout his letters to Frau von Stein, or it is condensed into stars in the form of poems, some of which are sent her, though occasionally he does not even mention his most excellent poems, conceived and elaborated on the very day, or the day before, he wrote to her. He did send her the first poem, the one he entitled *Wandrers Nachtlied*, from February 12, 1776, but he did not send her the other, much happier, perhaps the most purely poetic poem he ever wrote (September 7, 1783), though we know that he wrote to her on September 9, 11, 13, and 14:

Ueber allen Gipfeln  
  Its Ruh,  
  In allen Wipfeln  
    Spürest Du  
    Kaum einen Hauch;  
  Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.  
  Warte nur, balde  
    Ruhest Du auch.

That is without doubt one of the most perfect poems that has ever been written at any time on this earth. The only poems that can be compared with it, though they are not equal to it, are Shelley's *One word is too often profaned*, or *The flower that smiles today*, or Verlaine's *La lune blanche luit dans les bois*, or *Les sanglots longs des violons de l'automne*, the most inspired verses that have been written in the century following Goethe.

In his letters we find, however, such delightful

poems as *Mit einer Hyazinthe* (April 25, 1778) which begins as follows:

Aus dem Zauberthal dort nieden,  
 Das der Regen still umträgt,  
 Aus dem Taumel der Gewässer  
 Sendet Blume, Gruss und Frieden,  
 Der Dich immer treu und besser  
 Als Du glauben magst, geliebt.

It is here that we have the roguish and yearning poem *An Johannes Secundus*—on chapped lips—in its original and compact form, not distorted as it is in his works; and here is found, last but not least, the poem that is decisive for the portrayal of Goethe's love: *Warum gabst du uns die tiefen Blicke*. It contains one stanza that is conclusive by way of glorifying Charlotte von Stein:

Kanntest jeden Zug in meinem Wesen,  
 Spätest, wie die reinste Nerve klingt,  
 Konntest mich mit Einem Blicke lesen,  
 Den so schwer ein sterblich Aug' durchdringt.  
 Tropftest Mässigung dem heissen Blute,  
 Richtetest den wilden, irren Lauf,  
 Und in Deinen Engelsarmen ruhte  
 Die zerstörte Brust sich wieder auf.

We are prepared in advance to believe the best concerning her. We are familiar with her true worth. We see what she has been to Goethe for a long time —his need, his confidante, his ideal, his consolation —for he felt spiritually lonesome in those days. We know how ill he could afford to go without seeing her for a single day. He always insisted upon giving her an account of his thoughts, of his material occupations. He sent her all the interesting

letters he received and such little gifts as books, peaches, asparagus from his garden, hares he had shot, and so on. He took as much interest in her son Fritz as he would have taken in his own child. Indeed for a number of years he stood in the relation of a father to the boy.

From the very beginning she is Goethe's sole beloved, and she in turn loves him without selfishness or jealousy. He writes, March 6, 1776: "Thou one and only woman whom I love here in this vicinity, and the only one who could wish me good fortune were I to love another more deeply than you—how happy I would be, or how unhappy."

But he soon suffers bitterly from the imperfection of the situation. She seems, so far as we can determine, to have kept him at a distance for a number of years. He soon gained her heart. On the reverse side of her letter of October 7, 1776, she wrote this little stanza with the false accent at the close:

Ob's unrecht ist was ich empfinde—  
Und ob ich büßen muss die mir so liebe Sünde  
Will mein Gewissen mir nicht sagen;  
Vernicht es Himmel, du! wenn's mich je könntt anklagen.

In September, 1776, he writes:

Why shall I torture you, dearest creature! Why deceive myself and plague you! We cannot be anything to each other, and we are too much to each other. . . . Just because I see things only as they are they drive me insane. Good night, Angel, and Good Morning. . . . In the future I shall see you as one sees the stars—think that over!

He did not keep this distance long. In Decem-

ber, 1778, she took him to task for his self-satisfaction:

Wie einst Titania im Traum—und Zauberland  
Claus Zetteln in dem Schoose fand,  
Sollst du erwachend bald für alle deine Sünden  
Titanien in deinen Armen finden.

Of jealousy on the part of Gottlob von Stein there was not a trace. Goethe made love to all the ladies of the court and no one took his love very seriously. He went about it, moreover, in such an open way; he sent his daily letters and notes unsealed, without envelope, open, to Charlotte von Stein through his messenger. He evidently feared neither the eye nor the tongue of anyone despite the fact that as early as January 1776 he began to address her in his letters with *Du*.

If Frau von Stein nevertheless allowed her adorer to pine in vain for so long it can be explained from a combination of reasons: Her sense of duty, her fear of the curious eyes and of the tittle-tattle in the little town where no one passed in at one of her doors or out of the other without being watched. She also possessed the coquetry of woman that tries to bind more firmly by refusing. Whoever has studied the life of Charlotte von Kalb, of that lady, who, for a long while and for good reasons, was regarded first as the sweetheart of Schiller and then of Jean Paul, will recall that she, with to be sure a mixture of rashness and despondency that were constituent parts of the life of her soul, became the talk of the town, though she never resigned to anyone but her husband. And her husband she did not love; he was good for nothing. She bore him, how-

ever, one child after another at the same time that she was nourishing a warm passion for Schiller. There were then such women at the close of the eighteenth century among even those who seemed to be "Titanesses."

It is not until the year 1781, after six years of acquaintance and friendship, that Goethe feels completely happy in his association with Charlotte von Stein. Then it is that their relation to each other is one of perfect harmony. He has, he writes, never been fonder of her and has never come so near being worthy of her love. He claimed that she had expelled extraneous matter from his heart with the thoroughness, and in the spirit, that one might cleanse a robbers' stronghold. She teaches his heart, which is always in debt, to be economic, though she gives him a richer substitute than he had before. On the twelfth of March he writes:

My soul has grown fast to yours. I am not going to make a great ado about it, but you know that I am inseparable from you, and that neither height nor depth can keep me from you. I wish there were some sort of vow or sacrament that would make me yours, visibly and legally. How precious that would be to me! And my period of probation was long enough to think it all over.

The expression, "period of probation" is significant. When Hermann Grimm, in his book on Goethe, attempts to explain the supersensual nature of the case, by declaring that otherwise we must presuppose falsehood, fraud, self-deception, even impudence, on the part of Charlotte, and coldness, rudeness and impudence again on the part of Goethe, that is, on the part of the Charlotte and the Goethe whom he has depicted, he does nothing more, by his

ratiocination, than to lay bare the real value of his psychology.

Charlotte's mind "helps him to create." Her warmth "produces a beautiful climate about him." In April he is so happy that he feels tempted to follow the example of Polycrates and cast his ring into the sea. On his thirty-second birthday, August 28, 1781, he writes: "I am always yours, and with you; I am more of a serf than can be imagined." Indeed he can compare her influence upon him only with the influence Shakespeare has had on him:

Lida! Glück der nächsten Nähe,  
William! Stern der höchsten Höhe,  
Euch verdank' ich was ich bin.

His adoration flattered her; it nourished the woman's vanity in her to feel that the man who was considered a genius, who was sought out and studied by so many, both men and women, should be so taken up with her. This worship on his part gave her an entirely new position in Weimar, just as it later gave her a position in history. It even won her to a certain degree, though a really profound impression upon her heart it hardly made; nor did it awaken a resignation for him, a dedication to him, such as he experienced with regard to her. Women who are intensely adored are not accustomed to return the adoration with especial warmth. They accept the homage that is done them with a sort of submission, or as a tribute that is due them. They are but little inclined to incur extra expenses that may be charged to the love account; they regard these extras as right, proper and necessary.

To give Wolfgang Goethe world-bearing, finesse

of being and morals—that was the chief function of Frau von Stein. Among other requirements, he was supposed to express himself in French after the fashion of a genuine courtier. For some time during the year 1784 he had to write to her in French. This was in accord with her wish. In accord with his own nature he was all the while maturing into an ideal development such as the world had never seen before.

## II

What her relation to him in daily life was we do not know. She destroyed the letters she had written to him, he having returned them. What she meant to him, on the other hand, from the time he first came under her spell and for a long while after is made quite plain from Goethe's own works.

The first of these written testimonies is *Die Geschwister* (October, 1776). It was performed already in November of the same year in Weimar with Goethe himself as Wilhelm and the young and charming Amalie Kotzebue as Marianne. The drama is a disguised picture of the poet's love for Frau von Stein, so frequently called the *sister*. In the drama she plays the double rôle of the deceased mother and a living daughter. Though it testifies to the strength of the feeling Goethe had for Charlotte von Stein, it is otherwise a work that challenges to sharp criticism. It is a dull play. It marks an almost incredible fall from the heights on which he stood in *Faust*.

Even the presupposition of the drama, the underlying situation on which it is based, is at once un-

sympathetic and unnatural. Wilhelm, a young merchant, has lost an adored sweetheart who, by way of superfluous clarity, bore the name of Charlotte. She was a widow when he became acquainted with her, their life together had been bliss itself, she was great and pure, the earth was not worthy of her. He could not offer her his hand, however, for he had just squandered his paternal inheritance and had to devote his entire time to making his own living. He has again succeeded in getting on his feet, but now it is too late.

Suffering as he does from a tactless communicativeness, he reads his friend Fabrice a letter from Charlotte, which is, as we know, a genuine letter to Goethe from Charlotte von Stein. It is the only one we have, and reads: "The world has once more become dear to me. I had detached myself from it, but I now love it again because of you. My heart reproaches me; I feel that I am preparing trouble for you and for myself. During the past six months I have been ready to die, and now I am no longer ready."

Wilhelm also wishes to read his friend the splendid letter she wrote him shortly before her end as a farewell message. But the friend has already heard this letter and has enough of it. Wilhelm has in his house Charlotte's daughter, Marianne, whom his sweetheart consigned to him as a little baby. He offers no objection at all to having her regarded as his sister. She herself believes she is his sister and, we do not know why, he has not told his friend Fabrice, who is in love with her and woos her in her present status. But this wooing makes it quite impossible to maintain the useless secret any

longer. Wilhelm loves Marianne, who is his deceased sweetheart in rejuvenated form. Marianne loves Wilhelm and is unable to bear the thought of being separated from him. She accordingly rejects Fabrice and the lovers fall into each others' arms.

There is in the drama, as in Ibsen's *Little Eyolf*, the motif of incest. Wilhelm's relation to Marianne is certainly uncomfortable after, and in the light of, his relation to Charlotte. Marianne's infatuation in Wilhelm is equally, or likewise, uncomfortable so long as she looks upon him as her brother.

The least happy feature of this little drama is its style: it is replete with emotion and unctuous sentimentality. At the very beginning Wilhelm receives a letter containing some money he has earned. He apostrophises Heaven in the following fashion:

Dear God! How I thank Thee for having got me out of this trouble and for securing my safety! For Thy blessings upon me in little things after I have wasted Thy gifts in great things—can I express my gratitude! But Thou doest nothing for me, as I do nothing for myself. If that dear, charming creature did not exist, I would be sitting here adding up accounts.

Much worse, however, is Wilhelm's monologue the first time Marianne leaves the stage: it is a relapse into the nauseating style of sentimentality:

Angel, dear angel! How can I keep from falling on her neck and revealing everything to her! Dost thou look upon us, O holy woman, thou who didst entrust this treasure to me? Yes, those in Heaven know of us; they know us. Charlotte, thou couldst not have rewarded my love for you more magnificently than thou didst by entrusting thy daughter in the hour of death to me! Thou gavest me all that I needed and bound me to life. I loved her as thy child, and

now — still there is an illusion. I believe that I see thee again; I believe that fate has given thee to me rejuvenated; that I can now live united with thee again, as I could not, dared not do in that first happy dream! Happy, happy! All Thy blessing, O Father in Heaven!

Fortunately we have another and more important testimony to the influence of Charlotte von Stein in *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. If *Iphigenie* has been the most admired of Goethe's dramas, it is because he has saturated the material with the spirit of humanity in which his century approaches its climax. *Iphigenie* is a beneficent character. From her there radiates a rich and refined humanity; her beauty has so won the heart of the bold Thoas that he longs for her hand; the nobility of her soul has mollified the harshness of the Scythians. We do not have here, as in the drama of like title by Euripides, a goddess in the clouds; Goethe's *Iphigenie* is a nobler type of mortal; she is almost a goddess; she is reserved; she is womanly; she has a sense of right and justice, however, that induces her to risk all—her own welfare and the liberation of those who are dear to her. She cannot lie; she cannot practice deception; fraud is foreign to her soul; she must tell the King the truth; and she must secure his consent to the journey.

There has been a tendency to find a touch of Christian ethics in Goethe's *Iphigenie*. Entirely aside from the fact that the poet's attitude toward Christianity just at the time that he gave the character its final form was one of hostility, there is nothing in her bearing that is inconsistent with the antique. There is no less difference between the *Iphigenie* of Euripides who begs for her life and

prefers a wretched existence to a glorious death and the later character who, composed and courageous, meets death for the common good, than there is between the Iphigenie of Goethe who at first undertakes to liberate the prisoners by a wily invention and the Iphigenie who voluntarily reveals the truth to the King because she cannot lie. Indeed even in Sophocles we find a hero that can be favorably compared from this point of view with her: Neoptolemus in *Philoctetes*. As a disciple of Odysseus he undertakes to deceive the hero and carry off the sufferer's bow to Troy, but by reason of his noble nature, and the rare Achilles blood in his veins, he suddenly suffers a complete transformation, tells Philoctetes the truth, and refuses to forsake him.

Goethe's Iphigenie is antique in the simplicity of its structure and the personality of the characters. But written as it was at the close of the eighteenth century it is also profoundly personal by virtue of the humanity that irradiates it—a humanity that sprang in part from Charlotte von Stein.

### III

In order to depict the woman's nature briefly, I anticipate the course of events. We fully understand Charlotte von Stein's surprise and grief when Goethe, in 1786, without telling her of his intentions, left Karlsbad and started to Italy. A few poems that she wrote in September, 1786, give expression to a state of mind that is not far removed from despair. In one of these poems we read:

O wie bin ich nun allein,  
Ewig werd' ich einsam sein.

One stanza runs:

Ach, ich möchte fort und fort  
Eilen, und weiss keinen Ort,  
Weiss mein Herz an nichts zu binden  
Weiss kein Gutes mehr zu finden.  
Alles, alles floh mit dir!  
Ich allein verarmt in mir.

That the feeling of sorrow on the part of the Princess in *Tasso* is so similar can hardly be accidental:

Es reisst sich los, was erst sich uns ergab.  
Wir lassen los, was wir begierig fassten.

There have been critics who affected to feel that the real purpose of Goethe's journey to Italy was to break with Frau von Stein; they have imagined that after ten years he had become tired of her. This is an unqualifiedly erroneous supposition. The letters Goethe wrote to Charlotte von Stein while in Italy were not published until 1886. They prove as clearly as possible his undimmed affection for her, his unchanged desire to communicate to her all his thoughts and all his feelings.

The truth is, he had now reached the point where he *could* dispense with her. Indeed, he who had once declared that Weimar was the one and only place where he could live, and who had formerly been able to breathe only in her presence, had come to the state of mind and soul where he *wished* to dispense with her; or he at least longed for another place of abode so strongly that the loss of her did not outweigh the pleasure he could derive from this new life in a new environment. He had been basking in the sunshine of the South; he had steeped himself so completely in the various phases of classical

heathendom—nature, antique, renaissance, the plastic, the picturesque, the architectural—with which he felt himself spiritually akin, that when he returned home he found himself a different and a more resolute individual.

He had torn himself away from Italian soil with profound regret. Such consolation as he could visualize he sought in the fancied friends that would greet him on his return. He had, moreover, the feeling that he was bringing his friends back home a great offering. But when he arrived in Weimar his mind was at once infinitely cast down; he felt an irresistible melancholy; he saw the inhabitants of Weimar with new eyes; he saw nothing more than a narrow-mindedness that was half patrician, half plebeian. Even the climate of north Germany had become annoying to him. The German sky was contrary to his nature; the abominable weather was a vexation to his soul. "When the barometer is low and the landscape colorless, where is one to live?" Thus he writes to Herder. With the unfavorable impression regarding the climate and the general drabness of nature is fused the feeling of a chilly reception. "From Italy, rich in forms, I was thrust back into formless Germany, and obliged to exchange a bright sky for a sombre one. Instead of consoling me and drawing me to them, my friends brought me to the brink of despair. My rapture over objects that were far away, my torture, my complaints over what I had left and lost, seemed to offend them: I was wholly bereft of sympathy; no one understood my language."

Misunderstanding greeted him on all sides. The edition of his collective works, which his publisher

had begun, was coldly received: The public had turned its fickle interest to other authors. In the last letter the Duke wrote Goethe in Italy, the former disapproved, as we have already seen, of *Egmont*. Herder, who had once admired *Götz*, began to take offense at Goethe's liberal attitude toward accepted morals. The *Römische Elegien* he dreaded. His later judgments on *Der Gott und die Bajadere* and *Die Braut von Korinth* startle by reason of their narrow-mindedness. The friend, the soul-sister, Charlotte von Stein, loved, adored, glorified, idolized by him for nearly thirteen years as a woman has rarely been loved, adored and so on—what real appreciation did Goethe enjoy from her?

He found nothing but ill humor, reproaches, and disdainful offense because he had absented himself for over a year and a half. She had the feeling that a change had taken place within him while he had been gone; that he no longer yearned to be near her. She withdrew from him, stiff, formal and frigid. Moreover, she at once began to lay bare the moralizing side of her nature: She was annoyed by the fact that the little wench (*die Dirne*), Clärchen, should be elevated to the position of the Prophetess of Liberty regarding the future.

It was a source of immeasurable disappointment to Charlotte von Stein that Goethe, long after his return home, dreamed and talked only of the South. It was human for her to regard his praises of this South as a sort of offense to her. But it was not tactful on her part to become bitter and distempered. This opened Goethe's eyes to a number of things, but especially to the fact that the individual whom he had been worshipping at a distance as the incar-

nation of grace and charm was in reality a semi-aged woman. He himself was now thirty-nine years old, she was going on forty-six. He had lived in Italy, as did also his friends, an unrestrained artist's life with young and blooming lasses; since Charlotte von Stein now coolly drew back and away from him, the sensual attraction that she formerly exercised seems to have become extinct.

Three weeks after his return from Italy, Goethe became acquainted with a plain, healthy young girl, Christiane Vulpius, who had brought him a petition from her brother. She was an amiable child without either demands or jealousy; she captivated him at once. In the middle of July 1788 she became his sweetheart, in November 1789 she moved into his house; in October 1806 she became his wife.

During the last days of July 1788, Frau von Stein, seriously dissatisfied with Goethe's conduct though utterly unaware of his relation to Christiane, temporarily moved to her country place at Kochberg. She felt that the bond between her and him had been torn asunder; she never spoke of him without coldness and bitterness. But matters became far worse when, in the beginning of the new year, she learned of Goethe's tender connection with Fräulein Vulpius. From now on her position with regard to Goethe is for her "like a sickness." Passionate embitterment against Goethe and unbounded contempt for Christiane are the feelings that fill her soul. She leaves him a letter on her departure for Ems in 1789 in which she seems to have demanded the dissolution of his relation to Christiane as the indispensable prerequisite for future friendship.

His answer of July 1 is calm and benevolent, but

declinatory. He begins with the remark that in a case like this it is difficult, and yet not difficult, to be sincere. He reproaches her for the inhospitable reception she accorded him on his return from Italy and for her numerous unkind remarks: That he could just as well have remained away since he no longer took any interest in people, and so on. "And all of this before there was the slightest reference to the situation that seems to offend you so! And what is this situation anyhow? Who gets the worst of it? Who lays claim to the feelings that I give the poor creature, or the hours that I spend with her?"

One of two things is true: Charlotte's relation to Goethe, which she broke off, was an affair of friendship only. And in this case her embitterment at his stay in Italy and his union with Christiane is preposterous. Or the relation was more than mere friendship. What hypocrisy there lies in her damning judgments of Christiane! Goethe tells Charlotte without passion and without anger, but explicitly, that he simply cannot submit to the scornful, fiendish way she treats him, and at the close he writes a passage which certainly must be taken literally (since Goethe loathed coffee), but which could only excite the wrathful lady even more:

Unfortunately you have for a long time rejected my advice concerning coffee; you have adopted a diet that is exceedingly injurious to your health. Aside from the fact that it is very difficult to overcome many impressions purely spiritually, you even strengthen the hypochondriacally torturing power of anxious ideas by an external means the harmful qualities of which you have already had abundant opportunity to observe and which you, out of love for me, desisted from using for a time to the distinct advantage of your health.

From now on and for the next ten years there is no word of abuse that Charlotte von Stein fails to use in her commitments on Goethe. She treats him as a low, degraded person, a half ridiculous figure. For her he is only the stout *Geheimrat* with the double chin, whose chambermaid is his mistress. She sides unreservedly with the fine folks of Weimar for whom Goethe was now the extinct volcano, the fallen star. But she is more passionate in her outbreaks. Again and again she is terrified to see him becoming so stout and beefy; she is shocked to see that his productions all stand on a low moral plane. She even sympathizes with Kotzebue in his malignant attacks on him. And when they meet socially she never hesitates for a minute to make the most offensive kind of remarks straight to his face.

Indifference, contempt, pity, these are the feelings she parades before the world with regard to him. To her son she writes: "Please write to Goethe; it will not be the first time we have letters from the living to the dead." Or, "concerning our former friend, I have again heard something disadvantageous; if I could only efface him from my memory!" She always speaks as though she had been "deceived by a friend." And when Christiane, in November 1793, gave birth to a daughter (who died immediately) she writes: "He is dreadfully proud of his daughter; he is as friendly as an earwig and makes French puns." Of his *Römische Elegien* we read: "For that sort of poetry I simply have no appreciation." Of his *Hermann und Dorothea* we read: "It is rather nice; it is only a pity that in the passages on the housewife who cooks on the pure hearth, Virgin Vulpius constantly destroys the

illusion." When *Wilhelm Meister* is finished she writes of it to her son:

There are some pretty ideas in it, especially on the political relations of life, and the book begins with a feeling of which I no longer believed Goethe, as a perfect child of this earth, was capable. It must owe its origin to old times. Incidentally, however, all the women in the book conduct themselves in an undignified way; and if he does occasionally detect some good feelings in human nature, he at once smears them up with filth so as not to be obliged to concede that human nature has something divine in it. It is always as if the Devil were pointing the way, lest we might make a mistake with regard to his feelings and look upon them as being better than they actually were.

#### IV

All of this is rather ugly and unrefined, though it surpasses in no way what we would normally expect from a woman whose importance can easily be exaggerated, and whose self-esteem was mortally wounded. But this is not all. Quite terrifying to any who preserves a shred of faith in humankind and who can still be astonished at an act of stupidity on the part of a woman who seeks revenge because she is no longer loved, is the attempt at a poetic portrayal of Goethe's personality such as Charlotte von Stein undertakes at this stage of her career.

History teaches us that for a prominent man nothing is more hazardous than the nourishing of an acquaintance with a woman who writes. If he does not love her it is wrong: she will not fail to use her pen by way of taking vengeance on the luke-warm gentleman. If he loves her for a while and

then no more it is worse: the rejected lady will take an even more violent vengeance with the help of her faithful stationery. Nor does it alter matters if, as in the case before us, he found her at the beginning among those who do not write. Wrath over the fact that she has been unable to captivate him forces the pen into her hand and makes a literary woman out of a non-literary one: there is at least one book she can write—the book on him who was so faithless. Lady Caroline Lamb's embitterment against Byron at the beginning of the nineteenth century made her an authoress. In her novel entitled *Glenvaron* she stamped Byron as the devil of dissimulation and iniquity.

It is of course easier for those who have already appeared before the world as authoresses to have recourse to the written word. When Alfred de Musset was once dead, George Sand gave in her *Elle et Lui* a quite forbidding and altogether unreliable picture of him and his relation to her. When Chopin was dying she portrayed him in *Lucretia Floriani* as a weak child, irrational and irritable to the point of madness.

And think of the portraits of himself Franz Liszt was obliged to see in narrative literature! For women he was the most dangerous man of his age. His friend of years standing, Countess d'Agoult, gave in her *Nelida* a caricature of Liszt that awakens disgust—disgust for the woman who wrote it. She even goes so far as to deny him all creative ability. And the anonymous authoress of the story *Histoire d'une Cosaque* raged a good many years later about the heartlessness of the celebrated artist, which heartlessness consisted in the fact that he,

despite numerous invitations, could never be moved to show his lady admirer just a little bit of love in return.

Later on Gustave Flaubert furnished a magnificent example of how love for a muse is punished, or speaking with perhaps more accuracy, how a great poet can come to do penance for not having rejected the muse's passion at the right time. Flaubert's letters to Madame Colet show, despite the frank benevolence of which they give testimony, that throughout the years in which they knew each other she was the offensive, he the defensive party. She is embittered at the rareness of his visits and positively jealous of the persistent and apparently unfruitful work that is keeping him from her. And when their relation to each other has been dissolved she takes vengeance with unmitigated energy. She describes him first in *Histoire d'un soldat*, and then in her book *Lui*, as hard-hearted, avaricious, selfish, quite unpoetic, and talentless as an author. She even sends letters to his house in which she accuses him, who never came in contact with the Tuileries, of cringing before tyrants.

Neither Byron nor Musset, neither Liszt nor Flaubert was, however, a personality of Goethe's magnitude. And yet no one of them was treated worse or more inconsiderately than Goethe was treated by Charlotte von Stein. After the break she wrote her tragedy entitled *Dido*. In it she portrays herself as Elissa and Goethe as the poet Ogon. It is interesting to see the crimes and vulgarities that she has ascribed to this sinful wretch in whose mouth are placed modes of expression, and some of the speeches, that Goethe actually made to her.

In the first place he is the most stupid of braggarts. Nature, he says, has been able to realize its ideals in only a few beings; to them belong he and his equals: "The rest are creeping things trodden under foot, unnoticed."

He is portrayed as the most vulgar of cynics. He admits that he formerly strove after virtue and purity in all seriousness; this was due to his innate yearning to belong to the select. But he did not succeed in this; it was not becoming to him, either. And with her favorite ridicule of Goethe's figure, which was a trifle stout though by no means massive, the authoress has him continue:

I became so lean; but now just look at my cheeks, my well rounded stomach, the calves of my legs. I will voluntarily confide a secret to you: exalted emotions come from a shriveled stomach.

He is vain to the point of sheer foolishness:

I confess that I like to hear myself praised. It makes no difference whether the praise be born of generosity, flattery, or stupidity. I do not like to look behind the curtain.

He is faithless as a matter of principle: "We make promises to ourselves; and we can also break them." He is a hypocrite; his hypocrisy he considers a convenient virtue.

Elissa, who honors poetry and poets, and who once upon a time built an altar to Ogon, has at last come to see the difference between the talent and the man. She says to him:

Once I was mistaken in you; but I see you all too well; despite the beautiful curls of your hair and your elegant shoes, there are still the buck's horns and hoofs and the

other appurtenances of the satyr, and for that sort of beings promises are never sacred.

He replies with Goethe's letter from June 1, 1789:

These false ideas come from a certain unhealthy drink from the use of which I have always tried to dissuade you. Drink only the juice of the grape, the noble wine, and you will soon learn to reconcile yourself to the attractive picture you make of me.

She rejects him with the remark: "I refuse to lay my safety in your hands, for your morals are dependent upon your kitchen." He refutes her once more with expressions from that letter, "It is difficult to tell the truth without giving offense," and excuses himself with the expression Goethe so frequently used, "Man must from time to time slough off his skin."

When he is alone, he unmasks himself in a monologue as a totally depraved actor:

The gestures of the actor which, by the way, I am in the habit of practicing in the presence of women, always had the best effect when I fell before their feet in a picturesque position and attracted their attention through an expression of mute passion; in this way I never missed my objective.

The sum total of his character is that he is an arch-traitor. He deserts his benefactress, the Queen (Duchess Luise), after he had tried in vain to seduce her—this motif is especially venomous—only to take up with her ill-mannered and unrefined antagonist and rival Jarbes at the moment that the latter came with armed power. Though there is some disagreement as to who is meant by certain other characters

in the drama no one has ever doubted but that the poet Ogon is aimed at and meant for Goethe. It was also this very circumstance which, at the last moment, caused Charlotte von Stein to decline the offers that had been made her to have *Dido* published and performed on the German stage.

The drama as a whole is a bungling bit of work; it is so utterly without wit, style, and spirit that by the widest stretch of charity it cannot be called literature. It is on this account all the more instructive to note the enthusiasm with which Schiller in January 1797, when his friendship with Goethe was the most cordial, writes to Frau von Stein concerning the "beautiful, serene, blithe spirit" of the drama. He has such an outburst as this: "In my whole life I have read little, perhaps nothing, which showed me the soul from which this came in such a clear, true, and modest light as does this drama; I am on this account more moved than I can tell you." No one strove more zealously than he to have the drama printed; it was too as a result of his encouragement that Charlotte sent it to the theatre in Breslau.

In the year 1796 occurred the first, wellnigh voluntary, step toward a reconciliation between Goethe and Frau von Stein. It came about as follows: Schiller's little son Karl accompanied Goethe's six-year-old August to Frau von Stein's house. She took a liking to the child at once. Goethe made a conciliatory move almost immediately. It was just at the time of this incident that Frau von Stein put the finishing touches to her *Dido*, and dispatched the finished product to Schiller.

During the following years the erstwhile lovers

met each other infrequently. In October, 1798, Charlotte writes: "I see Goethe but rarely, and if I do not see him for some time, I am terrified at the way he is constantly taking on avoirdupois." Goethe's severe illness in January, 1801, softened her feelings just a little, but not so much as to prevent her from writing in the following vein on April 23: "Day before yesterday I was sitting with Frau v. Trebra in the old rose-hedge. Goethe passed by with his chambermaid at his side. I was ashamed of him to the bottom of my heart, and held my parasol before my face as though I had not noticed him."

Nevertheless Goethe strove, as though he did not wish to give up his aging friend, patiently and incessantly after reconciliation. In 1804, when he was fifty-five and she sixty-one, he announced his visit one day. The result was not wholly happy. Frau von Stein had subscribed to *Der Freimüthige*, a journal published by Kotzebue in connection with Merkel, the chief aim of which was to batter down all respect for Goethe. In its hostility to him it was iniquitous, narrow-minded, moralizing, and art-re-nouncing. The mere fact that Frau von Stein subscribed to it is proof of the low level of her development and the intensity of her malevolence.

While Goethe was paying her a call that lasted for two hours, a number of the magazine was brought in. She writes in this connection to her son:

I feel that he is disagreeably inclined toward me and there is such a wide divergence between our ways of thinking that I unintentionally give him pain at every moment. Unfortunately *Der Freimüthige* was brought in during his visit. He began to discuss the stupidity of the reading pub-

lic that would busy itself with such a sheet. Part of that was of course meant for me. He simply did not wish to see the journal; I had to lay something over it.

The woman who had inspired *Iphigenie* ended, spiritually, as the authoress of *Dido* and a subscriber to Kotzebue's journal.

## CHAPTER XX

### *Lila; Harzreise im Winter—Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*

JUST at this period, when Goethe himself was not preparing anything for publication, he was disagreeably surprised to see his *Sämmtliche Schriften* put on sale by an impudent Berlin bookseller by the name of Himburg. The enterprise was effected in secret and contrary to Goethe's express desire. Three separate editions appeared, each one augmented, in the years 1775, 1777 and 1779, under the title *D. Göethens Schriften*. The "D" was supposed to stand for "Doctor." Not even the name was correctly spelled. There was much in these editions of which Goethe was not the author, and all of them teemed with inaccuracies. Copyright of original texts was then unknown; nor was there any law protecting the author in the matter of translations. It was in all probability the fact that an outsider had obtained possession of Goethe's writings that later inspired him to edit the first edition of his works (in eight volumes). This edition appeared in the year 1790. It was also this event that induced him to revise the dramas and operettas from his younger days, a task that occupied so much of his best time during his journey to Switzerland.

One of these operettas was *Lila*, a peculiar and, for a modern reader, unsatisfactory creation. It

was a topical drama, written in December, 1776, with the distinct idea of appeasing and consoling the young Duchess Luise in her not entirely happy domestic life. Goethe is supposed to have obtained the idea from Frau von Stein who, in turn, had taken it from an old and now forgotten French drama entitled *L'Hypocondriaque*. The French drama belonged to the first half of the seventeenth century. In the drama (as in the first form that *Lila* received, the form that no longer exists) an infatuated man loses his mind because of a false report of the death of his sweetheart. She hastens to the disconsolate soul and all unite in trying to cure him of his delusions. They show him several persons who are regarded as being dead and who are brought back to life by music. The sick man at last believes that he has been wakened from the dead and embraces his sweetheart. Though Goethe's intention was to effect a cure of the Duchess's diseased mind, he arranged it, so as not to be too distinct and not to hurt anyone's feelings, in such a way that, in the first draft of the drama, it was not Lila but her husband whose mind was diseased. The piece was revised with the retention of this content first in February, 1778, and again, "beyond recognition" as the poet himself says, in February, 1788, where the rôles are exchanged and where it has received the only form in which we now know it.

Baron von Sternthal has been wounded in battle. His wife, Frau Lila, to whom this news is brought in a letter becomes very unhappy, looks for a new letter with each mail, and suspects her relatives of intercepting the post. Finally there comes a false report of the Baron's death. Lila takes a violent

fever, becomes afraid of people, goes about in deep distress, looks upon her dearest friends as phantoms or shades, and even flees from her husband on his return home as though he were a spectre.

Under the treatment of a mountebank, her condition becomes worse until a capable physician makes it clear that in order to cure a case of insanity like this it is necessary to enter into all of the delusions of the patient. When Lila believes that she is surrounded by fairies and cobolds, her sisters and friends simply have to disguise themselves as such fanciful beings. The physician disguises himself as a magician, the young ladies of the house as fairies, a friend appears as a man-eating monster, and in this way—contrary to all rational modern treatment of insanity—the unfortunate Lila is cured of her ailment, recognizes her husband, and throws herself into his arms a happy woman.

There are a few wonderful verses in this drama: they are spoken by the physician who disguises himself as a magician. They express the idea of the drama much better than the drama itself. They run as follows:

|                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Feiger Gedanken        | Allen Gewalten           |
| Bängliches Schwanken,  | Zum Trutz sich erhalten, |
| Weibisches Zagen,      | Nimmer sich beugen,      |
| Aengstliches Klagen    | Kräftig sich zeigen      |
| Wendet kein Elend      | Rufet die Arme           |
| Macht dich nicht frei. | Der Götter herbei.       |

These twelve lines are worth a hundred times more than all the rest.

A play such as this is of value only to literary historians. Its chivalric purpose—that of consoling a disdained duchess—does not make the operetta a

source of entertainment to us; nor can anyone who is not entirely lost in uncritical reverence for Goethe read it with even a slight touch of profit. Its theme is in itself interesting rather than valuable. It is quite characteristic of the poet that he should cherish a belief in his ability to cure a sick soul through the ingress of environment upon the deluded conceits of the soul in distress and thus purge it of its fanciful agony. Goethe himself was of the distinct conviction that he possessed talent as a physician of the soul. He had, more than once in his own life, overcome his psychic sufferings by steeping himself in nature and by engaging in actual tasks of one kind and another. He fancied, on this account, that others could be helped by the same method, that is, by instruction. Just at the time that *Lila* was written, he tried personally such a cure. The poem entitled *Harzreise im Winter*, which needs a measure of commentary in order to be understood, contains an obscure passage which reads as follows:

Ach, wer heilet die Schmerzen  
Dess', dem Balsam zu Gift ward,  
Der sich Menschenhass  
Aus der Fülle der Liebe trank?  
Erst verachtet, nun ein Verächter,  
Zehrt er heimlich auf  
Seinen eignen Werth  
In ungenügender Selbstsucht.

Among the numerous letters Goethe received from unknown individuals there had been long, repeated, urgent, and importunate ones from an exceedingly unhappy and scribacious youth who sought consolation from the author of *Werther* on the ground that he could best sympathize with his tor-

tured existence. The author of *Werther*, however, felt somewhat oppressed, but more repulsed, and let the letters lie unanswered. Curiosity at last won the day, and when Goethe was in the Harz (1777) he rode, quite alone, at the close of November, in stormy weather, to Wernigerode where the writer of the letters, a certain Herr Plessing, was then living. True to his fondness for mystification and incognito, the poet introduced himself as a landscape painter from Gotha. He spoke of Weimar, where he insisted he was well known, explained Goethe's silence on the ground that he was overburdened with work, had Herr Plessing himself read his letters to him, and then made the following statement: In Goethe's circle it has come to be regarded as an assured fact that one could liberate one's self from melancholy self-torture by a cordial participation in real affairs and events that lie beyond one's immediate interests. Herr Plessing, however, scorned this method of procedure as being quite ineffectual in the case of his peculiar type of melancholy—which, incidentally, cured itself a few years later.

In real life Goethe was then not conspicuously successful as a physician of the soul. On the stage he could more easily attempt a cure by means that a physician for the mentally diseased would reject once for all.

## II

The motif of the literary-parodic farce entitled *Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit* is not unlike that employed in *Lila*. Written in 1777, it too revolves around the distress of a married man the mind of whose aristocratic wife has become deranged by

external circumstances. Though it has but slight poetic value, this little drama in six acts is psychologically interesting. It was presumably from the reading of Carlo Gozzi's *L'amore delle tre meleranie*, which was performed for the first time in 1761 in Venice, and which opens the poet's *Fiae teatrali*, that Goethe derived the initial idea. In Gozzi's comedy—first translated into Danish by Meisling, and then felicitously adapted by Sophus Schandorph,<sup>20</sup> in 1894, under the title of *Three Oranges*—a prince has fallen a prey to hypochondria and bombastic, pietistic affectation of which he can be cured only by laughter. In Goethe's *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit* the literary satire is turned against sentimentality with which he himself up to this time had proved to be so infected. The drama is written with good humor; this much can be conceded. And as to its forms, it anticipates the jests of Tieck and the other German Romanticists even as to dramatic technique. We read for example: "The fifth act is now at an end; let us play the sixth." Though inspired with a measure of self-irony to the extent that it ridicules Goethe's own former stage of development, it is nevertheless far too allegoric to contain any real portrayal of human beings. We have here, in truth, what we have in the

<sup>20</sup> When Brandes started on his career, in the '70s, he consciously or unconsciously created a school. The more prominent members of this coterie of "realists," who set up Zola as their model, were J. P. Jacobsen, Erik Skram, Karl Gjellerup, Herman Bang, Peter Nansen, Henrik Pontoppidan and Sophus Schandorph. Schandorph fitted into Brandes's plan—the portrayal of life as it actually is—possibly better than any other member of the group. He was given to rather strong expressions somewhat after the style of Rabelais. His knowledge of the Romance languages and literatures was wellnigh perfect. He died in 1901, after having written a very great deal.

—TRANSLATOR.

majority of instances in which Goethe attempts to be humorous, comic: The attempt comes from a poet who is so pleased with his own conceit that it has never occurred to him how remote his production really is from having actual comic power. It is no mere accident that Germany has never produced a great comic writer. The German *Gemüt* is heavy and sentimental; the witty authors in the German language are almost invariably of foreign extraction. When Goethe tries to be satiric he becomes as a rule symbolic, or allegoric as in *Walpurgisnacht* in *Faust*. In this particular satire there is not the slightest portrayal of human beings; everything is grotesquely symbolic.

Andrason, "a humorous king," is annoyed because his queen, Mandandane, is so completely captivated by a supersentimental Prince Oronaro that she has lost her interest in everything human, walks only in the moonlight, sleeps by waterfalls, and carries on prolonged conversations with nightingales. When the King asks the oracle for advice he receives the reply, assuredly not edifying, and expressed in hexameters, that when a tangible spectre loses its ghostliness in contact with beautiful hands, and when a linen sack is emptied of its entrails, the patch-work bride will be united with her lover and perfect equanimity will return to the house of him who sought advice.

The Prince arrives; he is sheer languishing. His servants mention his lofty position: "You talk of my rank, unfortunate man? What is my rank against this *heart?*"—In the way of luggage he carries along with him a great mass of boxes and cases and chests in which there is to be found all the things

that make a sentimental heart rejoice. In one there is a gushing fountain, in another the song of birds, in another a heap of moonshine, altogether an artificial nature. And just as the nature which he cultivates is artificial, just so is his love meant, not for the real Queen Mandandane, but for the picture he has made of her, that is to say, for a huge doll of human size which resembles her to the minutest detail; it even wears the same sort of costume. He worships the doll, not her herself. When the ladies of the court get hold of the doll, it turns out that in its hollow interior there is a sack of linen in which, mixed with chaff, lie the enchanted books that have made the Prince and the Queen so daft: *La nouvelle Héloïse*, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, the above-mentioned imitation of *Werther* entitled *Siegwart*, all books which, according to the command of the sensible King, are to be thrown into the fire, since no mortal man should waste his time reading them. In this way we are enlightened as to what the oracle meant by his hazy wisdom.

The King apparently offers the Prince his wife; but the latter feels like a perfect stranger in her presence. She seems to have changed, a mere oaf of the one he loves and worships. They then bring him his doll and he is delighted. The King and the Queen soon find each other.

The sole profit to be derived from reading the book is the knowledge thereby obtained that Goethe at this period in his life felt disgusted with sentimentality in literature as well as in life, just about as Henrik Ibsen, when he created his Gregers Werle in the *Wild Duck* was disgusted with the "ideal demand" that he himself had made in the rooms of the

cottager where an "ideal demand" could not be realized, and where it simply evoked confusion.

The drama contains a goodly number of jokes on the raging enthusiasm of that time to see and perform monodramas. At the first performance Goethe had interwoven a little monodrama, *Proserpina*, which he had written the year before (with Rousseau's *Pygmalion* as a model). In reality *Proserpina* has nothing whatsoever to do with *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*, though a few of the speeches in *Triumph* prepare us for its advent. Without belonging to Goethe's happiest reproductions of Greek myths, *Proserpina* is a short work of far greater value than the heavy farce into which it was woven. In a gripping monologue *Proserpina* (who, as is almost always the case with the Greek gods and goddesses in Goethe's works, has a *Latin* name and is not called Persephone) expresses her grief at being torn away from the light of the sun and relegated to the mute and silent desert of the lower world. The young girls who were once her playmates seek her in vain in the flowery dale where they were so happy together. Hopeless is their grief, hopeless her own so-called happiness, her pitiable rank as a queen in the land of shades. She is afraid of all the inevitable misery she sees about her; she would gladly give the languishing Tantalus a drink of water, would gladly put a spoke in the wheel that hurls Ixion round about, and is envious of the poor Danaïdes: Not one drop of water can they put to their mouth, there is not one drop of water in their pail. But the source of greatest grief to her is the fact that she is indissolubly bound to the disagreeable and brusque Pluto, whom she can-

not bring herself to call husband, and whom nevertheless she dare not call otherwise.

She trembles at the thought of her mother, who perhaps has been looking for her on the playground to ask her whether she did not wish a new dress and new pair of golden slippers, and who is in despair over her disappearance. With frenzied cordiality she appeals to her father Zeus, who, when she was little, often lifted her up in his hands so that she believed she would swing on up into heaven. This same father cannot possibly be preparing to relegate her to Hades for ever and a day.

Now this is all very well. But it has a decidedly cooling effect on the mind of the reader to learn that Proserpina's return to earth is dependent, according to the quite irrational decree of Fate, upon her ability to find something succulent in the lower world. Nor is literary reason particularly uplifted on learning that since Proserpina, as the Fates inform her, having eaten of a pomegranate, an incision equal in fatality to that made into the even more renowned apple, is condemned to Tartarus forever and a day. Her despair is complete; our satisfaction is not.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### SATIRES ON KLOPSTOCK AND THE STOLBERGS— SECOND SWISS JOURNEY: *Jery und Bätely*— OPEN AIR THEATRE; OPERA TEXTS

Two humorous bits of poetry, both satires on German literature, belong to the year 1780. The first was Goethe's adaptation of the introduction to Aristophanes's sprightly and facetious comedy entitled *The Birds*. The significant feature of this work, significant for Goethe and for the state of affairs in the Germany of his time, lies in the fact that the political satire of the Greeks has been made purely literary, while the boundless and communicative sincerity of Aristophanes has been rendered so decorous by Goethe that his *Die Vögel* could be performed at a court festivity in Ettersburg near Weimar. Goethe himself played the role of Treufreund, and Korona Schröter recited the epilogue in which Goethe refers to Aristophanes as "the undisciplined favorite of the Graces." It is an expression that has remained through all these years, oft quoted and never questioned.

Here, as in *Das Neueste von Plundersweilern*, which was recited at the Christmas table, of the Duchess Amalie in 1780, it is Klopstock first of all, and his group, that constitute the target. Though

Klopstock was only fifty-six years old in 1780, he is depicted as a choleric patriarch, and scourged as the owl, that dreaded and terrible critic who would dissect all the young of the birds in order to show that they should have sharper wings, stronger beaks, and better built legs. He conducts himself precisely as do that sort of inflated and spiteful critics against whom Goethe directed his two poems *Der Rezensent* and *Dilettant und Kritiker*. The whole day long he reflects and ponders over what the other birds did yesterday. When the two irresponsible chaps, Hoffegut and Treufreund, who act as though they were birds and the friends of birds, stand before him, he asks them first whether they are writers. Since they are thought of as being German they reply "Just as all of our countrymen." They encourage him to have a law passed so that they may be better paid and protected against piracy, so that they may receive the consent of their ancestors to approach their unmarried daughters, so that they may receive the consent of married men to associate with their wives, so that they may not have to pay for what they receive, and so on. Profoundly agitated because of their shamelessness, the owl replies that there is just one course to be taken with them: They must be led forthwith either to the house of correction or to the insane asylum—a reply which possibly contains a reminder of Klopstock's moralising letter to Goethe shortly after his arrival in Weimar.

An inseparable companion and menial admirer of the owl is the parrot who stands for the then twenty-eight-year old Professor Karl Friedrich Cramer at the University of Kiel; he had already written whole works by way of glorifying Klopstock, the first in

two volumes, the second (*Klopstock. Er und über ihn*) in five full volumes, both of which gave evidence of such an exaggerated and tasteless enthusiasm that they simply staggered Goethe. This is the same Cramer who later formed such an intimate friendship with Jens Baggesen, translated his works into German, and was his original companion on his great journey through Germany portrayed in *Labyrinthen*.<sup>21</sup> Here he appears as a fatuous repeater of the owl, hopelessly destitute of critical judgment: The owl, he says, passes judgment on everything, and that suits me quite well; I do not need to pass any judgments myself. Taken all in all, this satire is stingless. The wittiest part of the drama owes its origin to Aristophanes.

*Das Neueste von Plundersweilern* has, in common with *Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*, rabid mockery of the mournful in *Werther*; in common with *Die Vögel*, it has the ridiculing of Klopstock and his idolization. Klopstock is sketched as follows:

Der Mann den Ihr am Bilde seht  
Scheint halb ein Barde und halb Prophet.

Cramer is scorned even more sharply than in the Aristophanic comedy:

Ein Zögling kniet ihm an dem Rücken,  
Der denkt, die Welt erst zu beglücken,  
Zeigt des Propheten Strümpf' und Schuh,  
Betheuert, er habe auch Hosen dazu,

<sup>21</sup> Baggesen's *Labyrinthen* (1792-1793) is a description of his travels through Germany, Switzerland and France. It is one of the most sprightly and intellectual books that has ever been written in Danish. It has been compared favorably with Heine's *Reisebilder*. Baggesen himself has been depicted as a Dr. Faust who forsook his cloistered studies and went out into the world to enjoy any pleasures that might come to him by living a full and unhampered life.

—TRANSLATOR.

Und, was sich Niemand denken kann,  
Einen Steiss habe der grosse Mann.  
Vor diesem himmlischen Bericht  
Fällt die ganze Schule aufs Angesicht.

In this school two of Goethe's erstwhile friends, the Stolberg brothers, are not forgotten. The Counts are unmercifully raked across the coals:

Mit Siegesgesang und Harfenschlag  
Verklimpern sie den ganzen Tag;  
Sie kränzen freudig sich wechselweise,  
Einer lebt in des Andern Preise.  
Daneben man Keul' und Waffen schaut.  
Sie sitzen auf der Löwenhaut;  
Doch guckt als wie ein Eselsohr  
Ein Mürmelkasten darunter vor.  
Daraus denn bald ein Jedermann  
Ihre hohe Abkunft errathen kann.

All of this is sprightly, masterful, witty, but it is, nevertheless, wasted work for posterity. It is topical poetry, intended to amuse a small, intelligent court circle that had been initiated into the literary conditions of that time. It does not appeal to the German people, to say nothing of the non-Germanic peoples, of a century and a half later.

## II

On his second journey to Switzerland, made with Karl August from September, 1779, to January, 1780, Goethe greeted his mother in Frankfort, found his father in ill health, visited Sesenheim in order to see Friederike, now composed, natural and

dignified, and saw Lili in Strassburg who was now Frau von Türkheim and a mother. It relieved him to see that Friederike cherished no rancor against him, and that Lili seemed happy to have forgotten him. In Switzerland he made a number of acquaintances, among others that of an excellent woman from Zürich, Frau Barbara Schulthess, who won his friendship and to whom we owe the preservation of the first sketch of *Wilhelm Meister*. She had made a copy of the manuscript sent her between 1783 and 1785. The copy was not discovered until January, 1910.

The letters from Goethe's two journeys to Switzerland (1775 and 1779), the first series included in the edition of his *Gesammelte Werke* from the year 1808, the second not published until the *Nachgelassene Schriften* came out in 1833 (in Eckermann's redaction), were combined in the following editions despite the fact that there is a sharp contrast between them. The first are written in the style of *Werther* and are sketched in connection with *Werther*. The latter are to a high degree jejune and occasionally dry. The first abound in the emotional life of feeling, in the thoughts of youth and the longings of youth; the others are the calm notes of an observer, edited by a second person.

Let us note in the first Swiss journey that ardent demand for freedom, the denial of the fact that these Swiss, who wall themselves in in their towns and live according to custom and philistinism, can be called free simply because their remote ancestors fought for freedom. Let us note the (as in *Werther* and *Faust*) longing, so passionately expressed, to be able to fly freely through the air. Verily, Goe-

the more than anyone else deserved to live to see the invention of air-ships. He would have taken great delight in them and would have hastened to learn all about the use of them. Let us note also the admiration of nature which goes so far that Goethe in the presence of beautiful fruit prefers ocular to palatal enjoyment, that he has not the heart to pluck a beautiful berry, to bite into a peach or a fig. And let us note finally, not simply the juvenile joy that arose from gaining the good will of a young girl in a social circle, but also the youthful and wholesome sensuousness, of the eye no less than of the feelings, that is expressed in the unforgettable depiction at the close of the letter telling of the first time that the nude figure of a charming young woman was revealed to the young man. The portrayal is so excellent that one could leave it unread for more than a generation and then recall it line for line. In felicitously chosen words he describes this situation, extremely simple and at first blush apparently wonderful as it is: "She began to disrobe. What a wonderful feeling as one piece of clothing after another fell away and even nature, freed of all extraneous covering, seemed strange and made an almost terrifying impression."

The letters from the second Swiss journey are purely factual, though the view of nature expressed in them is not on this account less sympathetic. Right in the very first letter he strikes up a new, superior tone. We have a description of a journey through a mountain-pass:

The journey through this narrow pass gave me a great, calm feeling. The elevated gives the soul beautiful rest; it

fills the soul and causes it to feel as great as it possibly can. How glorious such a pure feeling is when it rises to the edge without running over! My eye and my soul could encompass the objects, and since I myself was pure and the feeling could never offend or become false, the things about me made a proper and legitimate impression. If we compare such a feeling with that under which we laboriously struggle with petty things and energetically strive to imbue these petty things with all that can possibly be imparted to them, and embellish them according to our ability in order to give our mind enjoyment, and batten it on its own creation, then we see for the first time that we are concerning ourselves with a paltry makeshift.

The passage is significant, for Goethe has consciously taken leave of the sentimental view of nature from his earlier days, the view that he ascribes to Werther when he has him find nature now effusively good, now merely destructive, entirely dependent upon his own joyful or depressed mood. Goethe has now, in peaceful contemplation, transformed his soul into a mirror, a pure mirror of and for nature that stands out unassailable by the changing moods of mortal man.

In the letters from the second Swiss journey, in contrast to those of the first, Goethe maintains a marked silence concerning human beings (as though they are too small to be of interest in this exalted natural scenery) and loses himself in a description of nature which offers one's fancy insufficient nourishment. It is rather remarkable that Goethe, with all of his admiration for Lessing's *Laokoon*, was never able to master the incontestable and accurate in Lessing's theory, namely, that only that description which can be dissolved in action adapts itself to the art of words, while the description of those

things that lie in space, side by side (as the neighborhood near Noir Mont) constitutes an appropriate theme for the art of painting. The reading of Goethe's mountain landscapes requires effort without offering satisfaction.

A far greater pleasure is to be derived from reading the poem entitled *Gesang der Geister über den Wassern*, conceived while looking at Staubbach and written in Thun. The poem portrays the incessant mutability in nature and the soul of man as the law of life:

Des Menschen Seele  
Gleicht dem Wasser:  
Vom Himmel kommt es,  
Zum Himmel steigt es,  
Und wieder nieder  
Zur Erde muss es,  
Ewig wechselnd.

Still another fruit of this second Swiss journey is the little melodrama, *Jery und Bäty*, from December, 1779. Again we have to do with a bagatelle, intended for performance at the court in Weimar, preferably so soon as possible, that is to say, before there had been any marked abatement of public interest in the private experience of the Duke in Switzerland. To that end Goethe tried to induce Christoph Kayser in Zürich to set it to music in a trice. It was set to music by him, and also by Reichardt, A. B. Marx, Wendel, Birey, F. L. Seidel, and J. Rietz. In other words, it was uncommonly popular in its day without on that account being able to hold the interest of posterity to any marked degree. Truth to tell, the sole part of the work that is un-

forgetable is the little poem which, in its day, made an impression upon Sören Kierkegarrd:<sup>22</sup>

Gehe!  
Verschmähe  
Die Treue!  
Die Reue  
Kommt nach.

The art form in this work approaches quite close to what the French once upon a time, and J. L. Heiberg, later, called *vaudeville*.<sup>23</sup> In the middle of the dialogue the speakers break off in order to sing a little song. Aside from an occasional touch of the Alps, there is precious little of the atmosphere of Switzerland in this idyl.

Bätely, a sprightly and beautiful girl, who lives with her old father in a hut out on the field, has been amusing herself by rejecting all wooers; she is cold and pert toward her faithful adorer Jery, though he has the very best of intentions and a house and a home and goods and money; he is even willing to

<sup>22</sup> Kierkegaard's interest in this poem may be personal. In 1840 he became engaged to a young woman in Copenhagen, but a year later he broke the engagement in response to the admonition of a "tender conscience." It was a serious affair in the light of that day. Kierkegaard assumed full responsibility for this odious act, using it, later on, as the theme of his *Stadier*, in which he appears as his own accuser and the vigorous defender of the deserted girl. Repentance followed in the wake of his apparently unmotivated "going away."

—TRANSLATOR.

<sup>23</sup> Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791-1860) went to Paris in 1819 and remained three years. While there he became acquainted with the latest Parisian novelty—the vaudeville. On his return he tried his hand at this genre—and succeeded. His "King Salomon and George the Hat Maker" was performed at Copenhagen November 28, 1825. It was a new type of comedy and one that has since flourished in the North as elsewhere. In 1826 he published a treatise on "Vaudeville as a Literary Type and its Significance." Heiberg was also a serious student of Hegel. His essay on "Human Freedom" (1826) introduced Hegelianism into Denmark.

—TRANSLATOR.

take her father into his home. The old man begs the rash and pretty girl to remember that he may die some day, that she herself is getting older and older, and that in case she jilts her excellent lover she may later see herself forced to take the first wooer that comes along. This is all in vain. The jolly young maiden is weary of Jery's importunity and infatuated antics. At this point the friend of her youth, one Thomas, appears on the scene with a herd of oxen; he listens to Jery's tale of woe and promises to straighten out the situation. He deports himself with a sort of simulated brutality, is going to steal a kiss from her, is going to beat the door down if this be denied him, he lets his entire herd of oxen graze on the family's meadow from which he drives their own cows. Jery reappears as Bäte-ly's cavalier, while all the neighbors whom she has turned down and thereby offended leave her in the lurch. When the more puissant Thomas throws the brave Jery in a wrestling match and then retires, Bäte-ly is converted; she sets Jery's sprained wrist, nurses him, takes care of him and eventually lays, with enthusiastic gratitude, her hand in the hand that was raised in her defense.

That is bright, innocuous theatrical art; but one does not need to be a Goethe in order to hit upon such an idea.

It is quite probable that it was the court life with its need of diversion, and its propensity for half dilettant, half artistic performances, that inspired Goethe to write at this particular period in his life an entire series of melodramas. In them he not only anticipated all the novel theatrical devices of which the German Romanticists were naïvely proud, but

also the modern rejuvenation of that especial hobby of the ancient stage which we now know as the open-air theatre. The little operetta entitled *Die Fischerin* (1782) was originally written to be played in the park at Tiefurt, with shifting illumination over the Ilm by day, and by torchlight. Nor did it make an unfavorable impression when the attempt was repeated in this century. Korona Schröter composed the music for the play, and took the leading part.

The drama is especially valuable because of its lyric woof; the action is as unimportant as it is unpretentious. A young fisher maid is restless and peevish because her father and her faithful lover always stay away so long while engaged in their self-imposed activity. They are never so sure to miss the set hour for dinner as when they have not caught a single fish, and have gossipped with everyone who rode a horse down to the water, and at whose house they laid-to. She wishes to avenge herself on them for their remissness: She leads them to believe that she has fallen into the water during their absence, and found a watery grave. They arrive with an unusually rich haul, and are grief-stricken when they cannot find her. As soon as she has punished them sufficiently with fright and mental anguish, she returns and is greeted by them with intense joy; also by the neighbors who have hastened up with burning deal-shavings in order to look for her. Here, as in *Jery und Bäty*, the young girl is wheedled into a marriage every thought of which she had previously avoided out of virginal shyness. *Die Fischerin* opens with *Der Erlkönig*, and in order to give Korona Schröter, who sang the leading rôle, an opportunity to display her artistic endowment, Goethe has in-

terpolated a number of folk songs from Herder's collection, an English song, a diverting one from the Lithuanian, a pleasing one from the German, all at once popular and merry.

*Scherz, List und Rache*, 1764, is an opera text in verse the greater part of which is in rhyme. Viewed exclusively from the point of view of euphony of verse, it must be ranked very high. What are Richard Wagner's texts, which after all give evidence of unquestioned poetic instinct, when compared technically with these? These verses are pliant, light, sprightly, and in some instances the arias rise to heights of unqualified excellence.

The theme, however, is of too little importance for Goethe to have wasted his time on it. An avaricious doctor has fraudulently obtained an inheritance of a few hundred ducats which Scapin and Scapine had hoped, and not without reason, to secure. The doctor is a classical type of the miser who counts his gold pieces when alone. The young couple are classical cut-throats who hatch out a scheme by which they hope to coax the money from the old man. Scapine acts as if the doctor had given her poison instead of a potion; she pretends that she is dead. Thereupon the doctor gives Scapin fifty ducats to dispose of the body in silence. During the night Scapine returns, frightens the doctor as a spectre, and befools him out of the rest of his money.

This is quite thin and hardly edifying. But there is real humor and great glamour in such verses as these:

Gern in stillen Melancholien  
Wandl' ich an dem Wasserfall,  
Und in süßen Melodien  
Locket mich die Nachtigall.

Doch hör ich auf Schalmeien  
 Den Schäfer nur blasen,  
 Gleich möcht ich mit zum Reihen  
 Und tanzen und rasen,  
 Und toller und toller  
 Wird's immer mit mir.

Seh ich eine Nase,  
 Möcht ich sie zupfen,  
 Seh ich Perücken,  
 Möcht ich sie rupfen,  
 Seh ich einen Rücken,  
 Möcht ich sie patschen,  
 Seh ich eine Wange,  
 Möcht ich sie klatschen.

A third play of this kind entitled *Die ungleichen Hausgenossen*, 1789, is merely a series of disjected and incoherent fragments. It is likewise in prose with interpolated songs and revolves in great part around the contrast between a whining poet and a bold hunter both of whom are inanely jealous of a young Frenchman with whom Rosette is in love. In the protracted final song, written in seven-eight strophes, which Goethe has included among his poems under the cumbersome title of *Antwort bei einem gesellschaftlichen Fragespiel*, there is one single stanza that is excellent. The profit to be derived from reading this unsuccessful sketch is slight indeed if we omit these lines on Goethe's ever widening experience with women :

Geh den Weibern zart entgegen,  
 Du gewinnst sie, auf mein Wort!  
 Und wer rasch ist und verwegen,  
 Kommt vielleicht noch besser fort.  
 Doch wem wenig dran gelegen  
 Scheinet, ob er reizt und röhrt,  
 Der beleidigt, der verführt.

## CHAPTER XXII

### *Elpenor; THE PROSE OUTLINE OF Iphigenie— THE FIRST SKETCH OF Egmont—THE FIRST SKETCH OF Torquato Tasso*

AT the close of the seventies Goethe began to feel a strong attraction for the antique. One evidence of this, aside from *Iphigenie*, is the extraordinary and valuable fragment entitled *Elpenor*, of which only the first two acts, and these not in Goethe's own version, are extant. It was written in rhythmical prose similar to that employed in the first three versions of *Iphigenie*. The manuscript from the year 1806 was to be revised for the complete edition of Goethe's works, though he could not prevail upon himself to undertake the task; he entrusted the rendering of it into verse form to Riemer. It is a pleasure to state that Riemer did his work well; his verses adhere most rigidly to Goethe's sketch in prose. They are, to be sure, quite free, but euphonious and especially pleasing where the blank verse glides over into trimeters otherwise so rarely used by Goethe.

As years passed by, Goethe regarded his attempt to create a tragedy in the Greek spirit with disfavor. He was an unjust critic of his own ability. What he finished is of imposing beauty.

Strangely enough, it seems to have been on the basis of a Chinese story that he planned his Hellenic drama. The plot revolves around ambition, mur-

der, and blood-vengeance which, when it came to be written down, appealed to him as being too harsh. But what has been done is merely the depiction of a princely youth for whom fate seems to have a lofty career in store. The portrayal of the youth, like that of his tutoress and excellent foster-mother, is entirely worthy of the author.

In some mysterious way, Queen Antiope has lost her consort in battle, while the hands of unknown murderers have robbed her of her son during a journey which the two were making together. The young prince, then a mere boy, was heir presumptive to the throne. She regards with ill favor her consort's brother, Lykus. But when she chances to see Lykus's son, Elpenor, of the same age as her own child, she begs for permission to take charge of the education of the charming child. Elpenor is to be regarded as her own son until his father and male educators lay claim to him. This is the situation at the beginning of the drama. It is the scene of separation between Antiope and her adopted son. In just a few strokes, but with an art that is at once rich and rare, innate loftiness, bravery, martial temperament, and princely spirit are depicted in Elpenor's mind. He longs after the fashion of a young Achilles for arms; like a young Alexander for an unridden horse that is his. He is at the same time aroused when he hears of violence and injustice; he wishes to restore, to reorganize, to help. Antiope gives him the details of her son's death, and places the half-grown boy, whose soul as yet knows neither hatred nor revenge, under a solemn oath: He must swear to become her avenger.

It is at this point that the tragic perspective opens.

It is manifestly Elpenor's own father who has the crime on his conscience. The Queen seems thus to initiate the unsuspecting boy into the thought of patricide; and in case he will do that, he must be willing to commit suicide. The possibility is also open that the two youthful heirs to the throne were exchanged during their childhood, so that Elpenor is really Antiope's son. The reader can imagine that, by imposing the obligations of the oath and thereby of suicide upon him, she robs herself of her dearly beloved child, the child she has had in her presence without knowing it. For a birthmark, by which the deceased was identified, is found on Elpenor's neck. And this Antiope explained on the ground of consanguinity. We do not know how Goethe intended to carry out the action; we can only vouch for the extreme value of the fragment which he himself so entirely misjudged.

There is a close connection between *Elpenor* and the prose form of *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. Goethe's oldest manuscript of the latter was lost when the library in Strassburg, where it was preserved, was destroyed by fire during the bombardment of the city by the Germans in 1870. Fortunately, however, Gustav von Loeper, who has otherwise rendered such invaluable service as a student of Goethe, had made a copy of it as early as 1858. There is another copy in the old Royal Library in Berlin; it is the one Goethe presented to Knebel. And there is still a third, for which we are indebted to Lavater, in the old Ducal Library in Dessau.

We have already discussed the relation of *Iphigenie* to Charlotte von Stein. At once emblematic and symbolic of the fact that such Grecian antiquity

as Goethe knew had come to him by way of Rome, is the nomenclature he has employed. We have here a creation in which everything concerns pure Hellenism, and yet there is not a shade of Greek in the names of the gods. Zeus is called Jupiter; in the genitive *Jovis*. Even Artemis, whose image and sanctuary constitute the focus of the play, is called *Diana*. It is, so to speak, a sign and a reminder that the Greek art for which Goethe—and Winckelmann too—had such profound admiration, was of Roman origin.

One basic characteristic of the theme, which makes it less effective, strangely enough never disturbed Goethe. The axis of the play is the contrast between Grecian civilization and Scythian barbarism. It is especially the moral perfection to which the Hellenes had approached that is contrasted with the Scythians' contempt for human life, and their inherited desire for human sacrifices by way of reconciling the goddess. Now, Iphigenie and Orestes, who stand as the distinguishing figures of the Hellenic spirit, belong to the race of Tantalus—a house of criminals in which, up to the very last moment, all the terrors and horrors of murderous crimes are at home. The descendants of Tantalus are at any rate worse, and farther removed from the moral ideal, than the Scythians have ever been. Tantalus, whom the gods took into their confidence, revealed their secrets to men, and was punished by being cast down into the lower world. The son, Pelops, came into possession of his beautiful wife through treachery and murder. Her sons, Thyestes and Atreus, murdered out of envy their father's first-born son. The father, who looked upon Hippodamia as being

guilty of the crime, forced her to commit suicide. Harmony between Thyestes and Atreus was of but short duration. Thyestes seduced the wife of Atreus; Atreus drove Thyestes out of the country. Thyestes, who had reared one of Atreus's sons as his own child, goaded him on to the attempted murder of his own father, whom the youth looked upon as being his paternal uncle. King Atreus had this son, whom he looked upon as being his nephew, first tortured and then murdered. Thereupon he acted as though he were reconciled, and enticed Thyestes with his two sons into the empire, had the boys seized, their flesh roasted, and served up to the father on his own table. When Thyestes, the meal being over, asked for the boys, Atreus hurled the head and feet of the murdered children down before him. On his return from Troy, Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, was murdered by his wife and her paramour. By way of punishment, Orestes, the son, has murdered his mother and Aegisthus, her lover, previous to his having come to Tauris where he meets his sister and after having been so incessantly pursued by the furies. Would it be possible to imagine anything worse than all this happening in the most barbarous family of the Scythians?

When Goethe steeped his material in the ideas of his own age, and tried to interpret divine curse or blessing on a race as a display of heredity in the biological sense of the word, he came into conflict with the antique idea in a very peculiar way; for from the antique point of view, a curse and its eradication was something quite external. In the prose play *Iphigenie* says:

A single family produces neither the demi-god nor the

monster. An entire series of noble men, or debased, presents the world with the joy or the horror.

How does it come that she, model of magnanimity, humanity, refinement of soul, and love of truth, came directly from a family given to every conceivable type of treachery and atrocity for five succeeding generations?

When we read the *Prosa-Iphigenie* we see how difficult it was for Goethe, after giving up doggerel, to find a new form. It apparently never occurred to him to adopt the metre of the Greek tragedy, the beautiful and solemn trimeter. He preferred prose and groped along as best he could; for this is not the prose in which he wrote the *Götz* of his younger days. Nothing is now farther removed from his mind than blunt boldness; his style has become a compromise between easy conversation and set verse, about as recitative in the opera is a compromise between speech and song. Though the drama gained much, stylistically, from the revision made in Italy, a number of features are necessarily clearer and more distinct in the prose form. We might quote by way of illustration, the trenchant though singular speech of Pylades:

Die Götter rächen an den Söhnen nichte der Väter Missethat; ein jeder, er sei gut oder bös, hat seinen Lohn. Segen ist erblich, nicht Fluch.

In verse that reads as follows:

Die Götter rächen  
Der Väter Missethat nicht an dem Sohn,  
Ein Jeglicher, gut oder böse, nimmt  
Sich seinen Lohn mit seiner That hinweg. ,  
Es erbt der Eltern Segen, nicht ihr Fluch.

The word *Es* seems to me notably unclear.

In analogy with the healing of the mental disease in *Lila*, Goethe has portrayed the healing of a diseased mind also in *Iphigenie*. After the meeting with Iphigenie, Orestes is cured of his mental sufferings. The cure is not especially convincing, nor is it effected as a result of, or on the basis of, deeper psychology. It was apparently the impulse to cure Orestes simply through association with Iphigenie as an exalted compliment to Frau von Stein that induced the poet to omit a more exact motivation.

In Euripedes's admirable drama of like title, which constitutes the basis of Goethe's drama, Orestes's insanity is kept behind the scenes. It is merely discussed at the beginning of the drama by the herdsman :

Just at this  
One of the strangers started from his seat,  
And stood, and upward, downward, with a beat  
His head went, and he groaned, and all his arm  
Trembled. Then, as a hunter gives alarm,  
He shrieked, stark mad and raving: Pylades,  
Dost see her there?—And there—Oh, no one sees!—  
A she-dragon of Hell, and all her head  
Agape with fangèd asps, to bite me dead.  
She hath no face, but somewhere from her cloak  
Bloweth a wind of fire and bloody smoke  
The wings' beat fans it: in her arms, Ah see!  
My mother, dead grey stone, to cast on me.\*

In Goethe's *Iphigenie*, Orestes's insanity breaks out at the same point, in the recognition scene between him and his sister. In Euripides, it is Iphigenie who reveals her identity by asking the stranger to carry a message from her to Orestes, who, by re-

\* Translation by Gilbert Murray.

calling incidents from their common childhood, overcomes her doubt as to his identity. In Goethe it is Orestes who, unable to tell the noble Priestess of Artemis an untruth, reveals his name to her. And when she thereupon tells him who she is and wishes to touch him, he loses his senses and exclaims: "Touch not my locks! As from Kreusa's bridal gown, there goes out from me an inextinguishable fire. Leave me! Like Hercules, I will die, untouched by others, a disgraceful death." He continues to rave until he falls into a swoon. When he awakens, he persists in believing that he is in the lower world, surrounded by his criminal and distressed ancestors, until at last the nearness of his sister, from Goethe's point of view her pure humanity, cures him in downright magical fashion. This can be effected only after his escape from horrors that were formerly his in order that, entirely after the manner of Atreus's race, the sister as sacrificing Priestess may offer up her brother.

Just as everything in Goethe, in contrast to the antique conception, is spiritualized, so is likewise the relation between Iphigenie and the goddess whom she serves. Beautiful indeed is Iphigenie's appeal, in Goethe, to the divine sister and brother, to Artemis and Apollo:

Oh, brother and sister! Ye who bring to mortals the bright light in the boundless Heaven, by day and by night, but never shine upon the departed, have mercy upon us—brother and sister! Thou knowest, Diana, that thou lovest thy charming brother above all that Heaven and Earth encompass, and that thou always turnest thy virgin face to his eternal light! O let not my only brother, my brother found so late, rage in the darkness of insanity! And if thy will in concealing me here has at last been fulfilled, and if thou

willst give blessed salvation to him through me and to me through him, then release him from the curse of the Furies so that the precious time that is given us may not be lost in fruitless effort!

Orestes replies: "Let me for the first time since my childhood feel pure joy in thy arms!" And he returns to delight in life.

Where Pylades in Euripides is the brother-in-law of Orestes by having married Electra, in Goethe he is unattached. A splendid type of sympathy arises between him and Iphigenie; it is a case of mutual attraction. We notice this especially in the fourth scene of the fourth act which, in the definitive drama, is so completely revised that the lines here quoted, and the feelings they betray, have disappeared:

When I hear thee, oh thou lovely one, my soul turns to thy consoling, courageous words as the sun-flower turns to the sun. The comforting speech of a friend is a charming gift unknown to the individual who lives alone. In his heart, thought and decision ripen slowly, whereas the fortunate presence of the beloved develop both quickly.

From the few passages that have been cited, one will feel how completely German literature lacked, at this stage of its development, a fixed and determined norm for the diction of serious drama. Everything is solemn and styleless, while in the drama upon which it is based, more than two thousand years older than Goethe's work, both dialogue and chorus are so established and steady that even in a translation, provided it be smooth, they prove unassailable by time.

As an offset to all of this, however, Goethe's

drama, even in the imperfections of the first sketch, shows an admirable concatenation of events; there is strict unity of action; it moves along with unimpeded majesty. There is not one superfluous scene. Nor is the action external; it rests entirely upon the strength of the emotions and their evolution. Despite the antique garb, the spirit of the drama is modern through and through. Where, in Racine's *Iphigénie*, a real human sacrifice such as that of Eriphile is inconsistent with the polished language and refined feeling of the hero, in Goethe's tragedy there is no grating discord. Such a tragedy an antique Hellene himself would have written—provided he had been able to assimilate the civilization of the past two thousand years.

Goethe's heroine is beyond the prejudice of antiquity. A Greek man or a Greek woman of ancient times would never suppose that he or she incurred, by reason of superior position, obligations of any sort toward a barbarian, even though he were king. A barbarian would have impressed them as little as would a slave. It would have been impossible for them to appreciate Iphigenie's uncertainty in the obligatory choice that confronts her: I must either deceive the king, or expose the life of my brother to grave danger. Vacillation of even a moment's duration would have been wholly foreign to a Greek woman of olden times. But Goethe imbued Iphigenie with a sense of gratitude toward the barbarian who had been her benefactor. It is not simply the thought of telling a lie that is repulsive, dishonorable, impossible from her point of view; ingratitude is equally so. In this particular she stands on the very pinnacle of humanity at its best.

## II

In the fall of 1775, Goethe is in Frankfort spending part of his time in a serious effort to overcome his father's doubts as to the advisability of accepting an invitation to Weimar, an invitation that appealed to him strongly because of the desire for life and activity that was in him. He chances in the meanwhile upon a book, written in Latin, by Strada, a Jesuit. The book treats of the war of the Netherlands. Egmont's character and figure at once stand out before his imagination in most attractive light. He reads of the conversation that is supposed to have taken place between Egmont and Orange. The contrast between the two captivates him. Orange has begged Egmont to flee with him and from the impending danger. He reads too of the parting scene between Orange and Egmont, the former leaving with tears in his eyes, convinced that he has looked upon his noble friend for the last time. For Goethe, this becomes the contrast between the serious, sober, thoughtful man of reason, and the genial, carefree soul replete with life and power, believing in the stars and rejecting judicial circumspection. Egmont's spirit is akin to his; he is indeed blood of his blood.

Goethe closes *Dichtung und Wahrheit* with the story of how his landlady in Heidelberg, the worthy Demoiselle Delf, vigorously opposed his decision to break off his intended journey to Italy and follow the call to Weimar until, with the carriage waiting at the door, he passionately cried out to her in the words of Egmont:

As if whipped along by invisible spirits, the sun-horses of

time rush on with the light chariot of our fate, and there is nothing for us to do except to hold fast to the reins with firm courage, and guide the wheels now to the right now to the left, steering clear of a stone here and avoiding a precipice there. The end of the journey—who can tell? The starting point? It is difficult at times to remember even that.

In case this account coincides at least in part with reality, the scene between Egmont and his secretary was written as early as October 31, 1775, and probability indeed favors this conclusion. The passage reminds quite strongly of what we have said above (p. 96) concerning the poem from Goethe's youth entitled *Wanderers Sturmlied*. It is clear, as is seen from a letter Goethe wrote to Frau von Stein, February 11, 1776, that the scene between Machiavelli and Margarete von Parma was written at that time.

We are in a position then to make a rough estimate as to the parts of *Egmont* that were written early in Goethe's life: These two scenes, the folk songs that open the drama, in which there is still a slight touch of *Götz*, and last but not least the inimitable songs that bear the genius of the very best creations from Goethe's younger days.

In these oldest scenes we detect quite distinctly the use of the historical feature in the portrayal of the period, all of which Goethe owes to his reading. A number of characteristic and doleful evidences of the fanaticism of the Reformation, both Protestant and Catholic, are cited. We notice quite frequently that the poet adheres rigidly to his sources.

In the folk songs skilful preparation is made for the appearance of the hero. The soldier who serves under him emphasizes with enthusiasm his skill as

a marksman; the workmen comment on his generosity; the invalid notes with pleasure his victory at St. Quentin; and again the soldier refers to his valor as victor at Gravelingen. This method of introducing the hero Schiller later employed in his masterful *Wallensteins Lager*, written under the influence of Goethe. On January 5, 1798, Schiller writes to him: "I find that I have here surpassed myself; this is the fruit of our intercourse; for only the frequent, constant communion with a nature so thoroughly opposed to mine . . . could place me in a position to push out my boundaries in this way."

The dialogue between Egmont and his Secretary shows us all sides of the hero's fascinating personality and is written with this end in view, hence in all probability first.

Read attentively this splendid dialogue! Egmont has let his Secretary wait two mortal hours. It was his intention to go straight home from the Regentess. He seems to have spent these two hours with Clärchen, and the Secretary loses all patience since he, as Egmont perfectly well understands, is expected by the Regentess' court lady, Donna Elvira. The Secretary lays the matters before his Lord that need an answer, and these answers characterize Egmont; they reveal him in every decision from a new but harmonious angle.

In the first place he shows that he is human in his understanding of his subordinates. He does not wish to hear of the outrages committed in Ghent. It pains him—as it does Goethe—to hear of doleful occurrences that have taken place and simply cannot be helped.

The pictures of the Virgin have been torn down;

shall the delinquents be hanged as iconoclasts were in former days?—No, he is tired of all this hanging. Let them be flogged.—Women too?—No, let them off with a warning.—He is indulgent toward the religious lunacy.—There is a soldier who wishes to get married. The Captain hopes that the privilege will be refused him, for far too many women are already following the regiment, so that its bivouac resembles a gipsy camp.—The soldier should be the last to whom this is permitted.—Some soldiers have outraged an honorable girl.—They shall be punished severely, and so on.—He is stern when he becomes aroused. Otherwise the answers show him to be mostly tolerant, sympathetic, respectful, carefree, eager to enjoy the moment, a hater of scribbling, an enemy of formal Spanish etiquette, a foe of court restraint, a man who in danger moves about with the safety of a somnambulist, and feels threatened only when frightened by a call. For him life has appreciable value only when each morning awakens to a new joy, and he falls asleep in the evening with new hope.

In the scene which, in all probability, was written immediately after this one, the scene containing the dialogue between the Regentess and her secretary Machiavelli, another personage enters who puts the last and final touch to the description of Egmont's personality. The Regentess fears the secretive, reserved, impenetrable, self-sufficient Oranien. The Secretary remarks: "In contrast to him, Egmont goes about as freely as though the world belonged to him." The Regentess complains, however, of Egmont's at times offensive bearing: He conducts himself as though he were the lord of the country

and could drive out the Spaniards at any moment in which this might appeal to him as a desirable episode. The Secretary says: "I beg of you, do not construe as dangerous his candor, his buoyant temperament which treats all important things lightly." In these scenes we have the entire character sketch in outline.

One will hardly go wrong if one ascribes the two songs which Clärchen sings to the year 1776. They are matchless by virtue of their profound charm and infinite simplicity; they have been surpassed by no other poet. The first characterizes the boldness, intrepidity, and martial enthusiasm in a young girl who loves Egmont. It stands in sharp contrast to the effeminate blandness, the juvenile piety, the fear of the judgment of the neighbor across the street, which Goethe's Gretchen displays. Clärchen's song begins:

Die Trommel gerühret,  
Das Pfeifchen gespielt!  
Mein Liebster gewaffnet  
Dem Haufen befiehlt,  
Die Lanze hoch führet,  
Die Leute regiert,  
Wie klopft mir das Herze!  
Wie wallt mir das Blut!  
O hätt' ich ein Wämslein  
Und Hosen und Hut!

The other little song has remained with proverbial forgetfulness in man's consciousness as the imperishable, almost definitive, expression of woman's love:

Freudvoll und leidvoll,  
Gedankenvoll sein;  
Hangen und bangen  
In schwebender Pein,

Himmelhoch jauchzend,  
Zum Tode betrübt,  
Glücklich allein  
Ist die Seele, die liebt.

After this the manuscript lay untouched for three years. In December, 1778, two scenes were added: Alba's dialogue with the son, and Alba's monologue. A third was written in June, 1779. Before his departure for Switzerland in September of the same year, Goethe sent what he had written to Frau von Stein and asked her to keep it. He wanted to take up the work again in December, 1781, but could not finish the difficult fourth act. From March to May, 1782, he worked on the tragedy again and with real pleasure; but then he laid it aside once more, and over five years elapsed before he again took up the manuscript. He felt repelled by what he calls the unbuttoned and student-like tone. It was not until during his second sojourn in Rome from June to September, 1787, that Goethe put his hands to the work for the finishing touches and got it out of his hands.

### III

Still another of Goethe's great dramas, *Torquato Tasso*, was planned during the first years of his stay in Weimar. Like *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, it was originally written in rhythmical prose and in a totally different spirit from that which animates the finished work. The completed acts in prose from those early days have, unfortunately, either been destroyed or lost. *Tasso* was begun in November, 1780; in May, 1781, two acts were done. The drama, as it stood in July, 1789, shows to a marked degree Goethe's

spiritual distance from the pulsing, throbbing life in the center of Europe at that time.

On May 6, 1827, Eckermann asked Goethe what idea he had endeavored to visualize in *Tasso*? Goethe replied:

Idea? I do not know. I had Tasso's life, I had my own life, and by blending these two remarkable figures with their individual characteristics there arose the picture of Tasso over against whom I placed Antonio as a contrast in prose. The other affairs pertaining to the court and life and love were the same in Weimar as in Ferrara, and I can truly say of my portrayal: It is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.

It is not difficult to take objections to certain phases of this statement; and it all needs some explanatory comment.

Goethe has either been inaccurately reported, or his own memory played him false. Manso's life of Tasso, 1634, with which he had long been familiar, and in which he steeped himself when he began to study the theme, contained nothing concerning Antonio. His figure did not indeed engage his attention until 1788, when he chanced upon Abbé Pierantonio Serassi's life of Tasso. Goethe was then in Italy; Serassi's life had appeared in 1785.

Ludwig Geiger, one of the most excellent students of Goethe's life now living, has said somewhere and rightly that Goethe originally had no idea whatever of placing the poet and the statesmen side by side as opposing, complementary contrasts; that he had planned to depict the victory of genius over custom and conscience. Tasso was to triumph over petty aspirations. The poet was to be celebrated who strode forward on his victorious career, hand in

hand with his ruler. The spiritual prince of letters was to be the companion in effort of the prince of affairs, the one obeying his mind, the other governing a state.

The longer, however, Goethe lived at a court the less he became inclined to give man as man equal standing with a prince, and the more settled he became in his conviction that his drama (as was the case with actual history), should lead to a tragic end. It was difficult for him at first to see such an unpardonable fault as that with which we are presented in the finished *Tasso* in a duel between two courtiers, still less minded was he at first to see anything particularly offensive or irrational in the fact that a great poet who loves, and who is loved by a princess, should stretch out his arms to her as though she were his equal. Goethe soon saw all of this in a new light. And this explains why the drama failed to advance beyond the second act.

Johan Ludvig Heiberg,<sup>24</sup> a cordial and intelligent admirer of Goethe, says somewhere:

How does it come that Goethe's *Tasso* is so great? Because the Poet and the Statesman stand opposite each other as real powers, and the one circumscribes the other. Why is Ingemann's<sup>25</sup> continuation of it so poor? Because he

<sup>24</sup> Heiberg was a leader among the Danish writers of his day. In 1827 he established the *Flyvende Post*, a journal in which a number of poets—Hans Christian Andersen, Carl Bernhard, Carl Bagger and others—made their *début*. His criticisms of Oehlenschläger have never been entirely superseded. His "Elverhøj," played to this day, has been the inspiration of several Danish dramatists. He was director of the Copenhagen Theatre from 1849 till 1856.

—TRANSLATOR.

<sup>25</sup> It is difficult to conceive of one of Goethe's works more unlike Ingemann's own than "*Torquato Tasso*." He could have reproduced the spirit of "*Götz von Berlichingen*" or "*Hermann and Dorothea*" with poetic accuracy, but a classical theme was poles removed from his temperament.

—TRANSLATOR.

made the Poet the one and all and transformed the Statesman into a mere court cringer *à la Kotzebue*.

Heiberg praises the ability to stand above one's own work, to arrange and supervise the manifoldness of its inspirations so that each is kept within its right and proper limit—he praises all of these qualities, contending that they are the essential characteristics of the true dramatist and the real drama, and states with emphasis that the real dramatist begets at once circumspection, irony, grace, and illusion. In its first form, *Tasso* would evidently not have awakened Heiberg's admiration.

An almost naïve confession as to how the poet in this case has sought and seen only himself in this theme is concealed in the expression that "everything was in Weimar as in Ferrara." Goethe's optimism and the conciliatory feature of his nature lie back of this observation. From the beginning he had decided to disguise his dear, humane German men and women as Italian men and women from the period of the Renaissance. This could be done however only through the exercise of an arbitrariness that took no thought for the consequences.

Goethe was certainly thinking of Weimar and not of Ferrara when he remarks concerning the diminutive capital that "Ferrara has become great because of its princes." The same thought was in his creative mind when the Princess replies that it has become great "even more because of the good men who have come here by accident and established mutual friendships." But there is a world of difference between Goethe's model Maecenas and the real Alfonso II. He had the blood of the Borgias

in his veins; he patronized Tasso, as he had formerly done Ariosto, solely because of his ambition. He was narrow-minded and economical to the point of avarice. His infantry and artillery, new types of cross-bows, new cannon of various calibre, engaged his attention much more than epics and sonnets. His case reminds of that of the Electors and Kings of the House of Hohenzollern. He tried to reënforce his power through the medium of diplomatic intrigues; he suffered severe disillusionment by reason of the undependability of faithless assistants. One of the most contemptible of these was the very Antonio Montecatino, who in Goethe's drama is the chief support of the state.

Ferrara and Weimar! Ferrara, where one made a wide detour in turning the corner so as not to have the dagger of an enemy thrust into one's heart, and Weimar, where it was forbidden by law to smoke on the streets. Nothing could resemble the Court in Weimar less than the Court of the family Este. A fearful legacy of murder, incest, dissipation, and family hatred hovered over Alfonso and his brothers and sisters: they loathed and persecuted each other. Eleanora, in Goethe's drama more nearly angelic than human, resembled in actual life a fury rather than a woman. She was wily, crafty, resolute, frigid, disputatious. If Tasso loved her and sang her praises, he could well have spared his pains. Her health, her litigation, particularly the case she instituted against her own brother, and her political intrigues occupied her attention so completely that she had no time left for love. And during one of the various conflicts that Tasso had at court with his rivals, she openly espoused the cause of his ene-

mies. The two sisters, Eleanora and Lucretia, the two brothers, Alfonso and Ludovico, their ministers, court attendants, confidants, and court ladies constituted a circle which was as unfavorable as possible to the cultivation of refined feelings and exalted thoughts. To this group came Tasso with his host of illusions. At his arrival they were celebrating the entrance of the new Duchess, Barbara. He was completely blinded, altogether enraptured by the splendor that was unfolded before his eyes. He was not satisfied with being a mere spectator at this court drama; he wished to play a leading rôle himself; and by reason of his irritable vanity he felt humiliated at every moment. With a naïveté that reminds Danes of Hans Christian Andersen,<sup>28</sup> he himself confessed the chief yearnings of his life: "My highest wish has always been not to be obliged to work, to be flattered by my friends, carefully waited on by servants, petted by those around me, glorified by poets, and pointed at by the populace." This was the ideal condition which he had hoped to find in Ferrara where he so soon felt bitterly disappointed.

Tasso seems to have inherited a tendency to insanity from his mother, and from his early youth to

<sup>28</sup> Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) has done as much to make Denmark known in the world at large as any other individual who spoke and wrote the Danish language. His fairy tales have been translated into virtually all the civilized languages. But he was a child his whole life long. Known and honored throughout the entire world for his fantastic tales, in which is buried a wealth of homely but profound wisdom, the appearance of a review that was not kindly written could make him lose complete control of his temper, his will-power, and certainly his peace of mind. He wrote to entertain people and lived on adulation. Few men have been more naïve or wiser in the things that touch upon human nature.

—TRANSLATOR.

have led a restless and tortured existence. His father was obliged to flee from the Inquisition and take him along. From his thirtieth year on he lived in constant dread of the Inquisition, suffered from sensory delusions, heard sounds as though there were a clock in his ear, heard voices and saw cats and spectres. In Antonio Montecatino he believed, he who suffered from the delusions of persecution, that he saw the courtier among his persecutors. When, in 1577, he fell upon a servant with a dagger, because he imagined that this servant was a spy in the employ of the Inquisition, the Duke gave him a few days house arrest. But in 1579 he had Tasso placed in a ward for the insane in the St. Anna Hospital where he remained for seven years. After his release the poet wandered about in a restless condition, lived for the most part in monasteries, suffered severe deprivation, and died in Rome in 1595, fifty years old.

Goethe's Tasso really gives the impression of a man whose mind is diseased, though it is not the poet's intention that he be regarded as insane. He pictured his hero to himself as irritable, whimsical, fantastic, subject to moods, as Goethe himself was when he did not succeed in controlling himself, and as he would have become had he not, through constant self-training, got control of himself. Naturally Goethe did not think of himself alone but in all probability of Rousseau, irascible, suspicious, and constantly suffering from the mania of persecution as Rousseau was, and certainly also of Lenz, who had been heartily welcomed at the court in Weimar, just as Tasso at Ferrara, and who had, like Tasso, made himself impossible.

It is entirely probable that from the time of the very first sketch, the idea had hovered before Goethe's mind of causing the presence of the Princess to have a pacifying, soothing, allaying effect on Tasso, just as the presence of Iphigenie had on Orestes, that is to say, as Charlotte von Stein had on him himself. The following verses are almost an exact rewriting of what he had said again and again concerning himself in his letters to her. Tasso reveals to the Princess his feelings as he made his way through the quiet corridors of the castle, moved by passions, and finally entered for the first time the room where she, followed by her maids, appeared on the threshold:

Welch ein Moment war dieser! O vergieb mir!  
Wie den Bezauberten von Rausch und Wahn  
Der Gottheit Nähe leicht und willing heilt,  
So war auch ich von aller Phantasie,  
Von jeder Sucht, von jedem falschen Triebe  
Mit *einem* Blick in Deinen Blick geheilt.

If we compare, however, Goethe's Tasso with the historical Tasso, and his Ferrara with the real Ferrara, we receive the same impression from *Tasso* that we receive from *Iphigenie*, as contrasted with *Götz* and the original *Egmont*. The time has come when the conception he was about to form of his own personality, his art, his life as a whole, removed him from all externality. He had begun to purify, to cleanse, to lave away the reality he had so loved and praised in *Götz* and *Werther*.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### *Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung*

SCARCELY three years had elapsed since the completion of *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* when Goethe laid the plans of another novel, much longer than the first and originally entitled *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung*. In February, 1777, he dictated the beginning; in January, 1778, he finished the first book. But his life was so distracted and the elaboration of the novel proceeded so slowly that he did not finish the second book until five and a half years after having written the first lines. He wrote on the third hurriedly until November, 1782, and on the fourth more slowly until November, 1783. He worked on the fifth and sixth books until 1786. All of this was merely the sketch of the first four books of what many years later received the title of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. At the request of Herder and the Dowager Duchess Amalie, he took the work in hand again in 1791. The first two books were finished in June, 1794. And then, in 1796, more than nineteen years after the beginning had been written, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* finally appeared.

It had become a common belief that the oldest form of the novel was lost. But in January, 1910,

there was discovered in Zürich the above mentioned copy of Goethe's original plan of the first six books. They found a place in the complete work, not as they had been originally written, but changed, emended, revised and completely rearranged. The original sketch—the *Sendung*, came out in two large volumes in 1911.

By virtue of its plain, inoffensively diffuse method of portrayal, the *Sendung* contains information of an invaluable sort, not simply by way of a better appreciation of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, but for the entire life of Goethe as a young man and poet. He is twenty-nine years old when he begins to write the story; he continues to work at it, with interruptions of course, until he is thirty-seven. Then he laid it aside. In seven or eight years he returns to it. He subjects it to a thorough revision and completes it.

Outside of Germany the novel in its completed form has never enjoyed unreserved popularity. In the memory of the majority, it stands nowadays as massive, bulky, prolix, slow in developing, and clumsily composed. To read it requires some of the great patience that was necessary to write it. It is in very truth a spring of riches, a river that wends its way over sands of gold, but a river that meanders, winding in and out with numerous curves and bends. Just, however, because the book did not come into existence at one single stroke, or at one casting, but in such a fashion that the section originally intended as the beginning is interpolated later in modified and abbreviated form, and owing to the fact that the original plan is widened, deepened and added to—for these reasons and others that

become self-evident on reading it, marked perspicuity and easy survey do not constitute its most pronounced features, though they are more evident in the first copy, this treasure that was lost and has been found.

In it the hero is not so far removed from Goethe himself. The poet has, to be sure, done everything that lay in his power to keep Wilhelm separate and distinct from his own personality. He has made the father the excellent and rational element in the marriage of the parents while he has made the mother, in as strong contrast to his own mother as possible, an intolerable woman who, after having borne her husband five children, is caught up by a passion for an insipid man, which makes her seem even more absurd and provokes all manner of strife and discord in the home.

Wilhelm's talents, on the other hand, are nearer to Goethe's own. The discriminating irony with which his unsuspecting simplicity in the novel is depicted, is not perceptible in the *Sendung*. He frequently makes himself felt through his manifest ingenuousness. He shows such rare ability as an actor, that he never abandons the stage, as he did in the novel, because of his retrograding talent. Moreover, his calling as a poet stands out undeniable and real. Here indeed we have a marked similarity to Goethe himself.

Even in the *Sendung* he dreams of establishing a national German theatre, not simply as an actor, but primarily as a dramatist. Again and again Goethe returns to Wilhelm's attempt as a dramatic author. One feels that it is in this sphere that his gifts are surest. By reason of his dramaturgic

knowledge and ability, he is able at his very first appearance on the stage to take a rôle that he himself had written and to make a profound impression in it as an actor and interpreter.

Significant indeed is the explanation of what attracts Wilhelm more and more to the theatre in proportion as his feelings gain in warmth and his imagination in flight. He is confined in a city; he is caught in the current of narrow-minded urban society; he is depressed from living in a house which has no outlook on nature, and which affords him liberty neither of mind nor of heart. When he takes a walk in the open air he is unable to assimilate the impressions that become intermerged with his being.

Here it is that expressions are used which could never apply to Goethe himself, such as the statement that Wilhelm is constantly paying nature a visit, and that nature in turn treats him as her guest. Where could he go with his premonitory feelings of love, friendship and valor! The theatre becomes for him a place of refuge, a place where, under roof, he oversees with comfort all the glories of nature; where he has the entire world in a nutshell. He avers that all unnatural feelings of nature are conjured up in this one focus, the stage.

Wilhelm, like his creator, began by writing pastoral plays; and like his creator he writes them in Alexandrines. When he shows these works to his friends, they ask him whether anyone has helped him to write them. By way of reply, Wilhelm uses an expression which sounds quite autobiographic: From his very youth he has always been able to speak or write in any metre that he had heard or read. He praises the genius and calling of the poet.

The poet has received all these things, for which men strive, from nature; nature enables him to enjoy his surroundings, and feel at ease with them. The poet feels the sorrowful and the joyful in the fate of all men; and he does so without consuming melancholy or blatant delight. The poet is a teacher; he is a prophet; he is a friend of the gods and a friend of men. This innate passion for the art of poetry can be checked just as little as any other natural impulse can be checked without thereby undoing the man in question. From his very childhood Wilhelm has experienced this irresistible urge.

In the novel *Wilhelm Meister* is nowhere so clearly depicted as a poet, nor could he be, because he was not supposed to end his days as a spiritual creator. A whim that was possibly more than a whim of the aged poet has him close his career, in the *Wanderjahre*, as a physician.

Coördinate with his laudation of poetry as an art is his glorification of the work of the actor. With the same impulse to speak ill of her own class that has caused many an actor to refer to his profession as sheer buffoonery, Melina has said that the standing of the actor is wretched. Wilhelm replies by remarking that the same might be said of many other callings, that of the politician or the soldier or the clergyman, by way of concrete illustrations. He exclaims with something of Goethe's own strong feeling for life: There have been people who were so thoroughly bereft of humanity that they declared life as a whole to be an abominable affair. But Werner, as in the novel, stands up for his vocation. His eloquent defense against Wilhelm's contemptuous remarks concerning the standing of the mer-

chant corresponds to Antonio's attitude toward Tasso.

Wilhelm's youthful infatuation for the actress Marianne is sketched from the very moment of the first indication of love until the union between them stands out in full flower. Wilhelm's tortures are portrayed much more forcibly than in the novel, those tortures that arose when he learned of Marianne's relations to another man. In the novel he passes an unheard-of judgment on her, though he suffers the pangs of Hell, pangs which the more mature author, however, regards with the superior air of a being too great for such emotions. In a very significant, though naïve way, Goethe disapproves, in the *Sendung*, not simply as an artist of the fact that Wilhelm resigns to his anguish by living in obscurity, cut off from the outside world; he also reproaches him for beginning to drink coffee when in this condition: "This publicly distributed poison, harmful both to body and purse, was exceedingly dangerous to him." One is reminded at once of his notorious reply to Frau von Stein when she passionately complained of his relation to Christiane Vulpius, in which he said it was clear from her letter that she had again begun to drink coffee.

Aside from coffee, Goethe also cherished a cordial detestation for tobacco. This leads him to remark that Wilhelm, in his embittered condition, "at last found happiness in his pipe." In Goethe's estimation he could not have fallen deeper. Nor is it apparent that he realizes the amusing incongruity between the despair born of infidelity on the part of a sweetheart and the joy he had from a can of

tobacco. In this connection Goethe wrote an oft-quoted epigramme:

Vieles kann ich ertragen. Die meisten beschwerlichen  
Dinge

Duld' ich mit ruhigem Muth, wie es ein Gott mir  
gebeut.

Wenige sind mir jedoch wie Gift und Schlange zuwider;  
Viere: Rauch das des Tobaks, Wanzen und Knoblauch  
und Kreuz.

All of the marvelous songs of Mignon and the Harper, the verses in which the completed work attains in reality its highest excellence, are found in the *Sendung*. There is only one difference: The songs in the novel are occasionally changed, and when changed it is always for the better. In the first form of Mignon's famous *Kennst du das Land* each stanza ends with the words: *O mein Gebieter*. In the novel there are three variants: *O mein Geliebter*, *O mein Beschützer*, and *O Vater*.

A lampoon which gives occasion to a superfluous scene is later omitted, while Philine's bewitching song is not written at all. Otherwise the two most remarkable characters of the work, Mignon and Philine, are as complete and perfect in the *Sendung* as in the novel. In other words, Goethe's ability to create characters was so well developed at that time that improvement was impossible. The later additions have to do largely with practical wisdom, wealth of thoughts and comprehensiveness of survey. So far as poetry itself is concerned, the completed novel is of no higher value than the masterful sketch from the days of his youth.

Philine especially is as real and corporeal a figure as there is in the book. She is frivolous and

forward, bold and blithe; she is almost invariably referred to with aversion and not rarely with disgust by those about her. Yet she preserves in the eye of the reader a never failing grace. She is a great *canaille* but a greater work of art; and she disappears almost entirely in those books of *Wilhelm Meister* that were added during the revision.

There are passages in the *Sendung* that are much more effective than they are in the finished novel, because in the latter they are placed so far apart from each other that they are no longer felt as contrasts, and the effect is lost. This is the case with the two definitive comments on the advantages and disadvantages of the born aristocrats, of the grandes of this world.

The passage "thrice happy are they to be called who are aristocratic by birth," which in the novel is spoken by Wilhelm, is far more telling in the *Sendung* where the praise of prominent people is the poet's own. The passage closes with the following words that are omitted entirely in the novel: All hail to the grandes of this earth! All hail to those who come in contact with the great, drink of their fountain, and participate in the advantages they enjoy. And again all hail to the genius of our friend who made the first step toward elevating him to this advanced state! There is unmistakable evidence in this of Goethe's satisfaction at being transplanted to Weimar. It sounds like unaffected homage to the distinguished society to which he was there introduced.

Quite close, however, to this, and without question meant as a contrast to it, is the passage in the *Sendung* in which Goethe shows how easy it is for

the distinguished to win the humble; they need to pay them just a little attention, or to bestow upon them just a few gifts the bestowal of which does not mean a real sacrifice. The poor, however, if they wish to win someone, are obliged to give their whole soul. With no little bitterness attention is drawn to the fact that the distinguished lack respect for art, and that they are indifferent to the best in art; they have in short precious little aesthetic or artistic appreciation. The expressions along this line are spoken by the actor, but it is certain that they, like the other ones already mentioned, sprang from Goethe's personal experience at the court of Weimar.

The deletion of the jocose passages bearing on contemporary events is instructive. One such is particularly so, for it obviously refers to Schiller's *Räuber*. Since the book was finished during his friendship with Schiller, and at his urgent appeal, the statement naturally had to be omitted. It follows the description of the bivouac of the travelling troupe, and reads as follows:

We cannot conceal the fact from the readers that this was the original scene, copies and imitations of which have been seen on the German stage *ad nauseam*. The idea of amiable vagabonds, noble robbers, magnanimous gipsies, and all sorts of idealized rabble in general has its real origin in the rest camp of this troupe which we have depicted with a goodly measure of reluctance. For it cannot help but be sorely vexing to find an opportunity to familiarize the public with the original only after the copies have long since robbed the theme of its novelty and attraction.

There are several passages, however, in which the self-sufficiency and conviction of his own genius,

both admirably concealed in the novel, are given well-nigh lyric expression in the *Sendung*. In the former, Wilhelm frequently makes a somewhat sad or characterless figure. After the Harper's song on loneliness, Wilhelm has a passage in the *Sendung* that was destined to be omitted: "The feeling of the nobility of his being, of the lofty goal in his destination—to develop the sense for the good and great among men—became once more living and alive in him." We are told that he longed for nothing more ardently than to be able to contribute his part "to the betterment and reformation of the world." It seems as if Goethe had wished to refute his earlier, and noticeably sombre, statement in *Faust*:

Bilde mir nicht ein, ich könnte was lehren  
Die Menschen zu bessern, und zu bekehren.

In a later passage—that has been taken out—there is the statement that for the secretary of the Count the grip with which Wilhelm took hold and brought everything to right was something quite new: The secretary was full of admiration for the vivacity and dependability of feeling with which our young poet knew how to differentiate between what was action and effect, and what was merely narration and instruction.

Stress is laid then on *our young poet's* purely theatrical genius, which in the case of the real Goethe was less assured.

The passage in which Aurelie expresses her admiration for Wilhelm's talents is also found in the *Sendung*. And even in it Aurelie remarks that he recognizes things without having seen them in na-

ture; that he knows everything from within; that he comes at almost nothing from without, or by external means. A little later she makes use of this significant expression; it has been modified in the novel: "It is a fetching characteristic of *a young poet and artist*, for you are both, though you make no such claim for yourself. This unconsciousness and innocence is, so to speak, the covering that envelopes and nourishes a flower bud. To be forced from this state prematurely is a fatal misfortune."

Stress is laid on Wilhelm's unmistakable calling as a poet, and his talents as an artist, while in the novel he abandons all thought of the theatre when Jarno, in his supercilious way, denies him every spark of undisputed ability.

In the *Sendung* we find Aurelie's original disapproval of the German people. She avails herself of a pungent expression with regard to all those who are captivated by her: It seems to her as though the entire nation were endeavoring to compromise itself (she makes an erroneous use of the term "to prostitute itself") in her eyes. In another passage, jesting derision is heaped upon German thoroughness and tediousness. They are discussing a play that the company is to perform: "It was a drama in five acts, one of those that never ends, a species of which the Germans are said to have several examples. Or maybe these are reproaches that come from frivolous souls who admire only the foreign."

The passage has been deleted from the novel which, condensed though it is in certain ways, cannot be entirely acquitted of the charge of diffuseness, and is to this extent genuinely German, not merely in the best sense of the word but also in its

less acceptable connotation. Goethe nevertheless stands out even in the *Sendung*, in the original plan of the novel, as a seer, abundantly rich in the wisdom of life, and as the creator of an inimitable galaxy of living characters, now mysterious, now sensually inveigling, now clear, now complex, now passionately morbid, but all without exception forming and fashioning the leading character who is in the process of uninterrupted development down to the very last moment.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### PHILOSOPHICAL LYRICS—STUDIES IN NATURE: DISCOVERIES IN ANATOMY AND GEOLOGY

DURING these same years Goethe wrote some lyric poems which show him at the height of his creative power, enrapturing as they are by reason of an imaginative force that makes itself felt though they do not seem to have been elaborated with especial care from a purely technical point of view. They are written in free rhythm and are wholly without rhyme or a fixed metre. The first of them is, to be sure, addressed to fancy; but it is not in itself noticeably distinguished because of its fancy. It reveals on the contrary a rigid and classic choice of words. This explains why these poems have retained their position in the memory of man without the affiliated aid of art.

The first one, *Meine Göttin* (1780), is a hymn to imagination and is the least important of the three. In the beginning it is a trifle conventional in the manner in which it equips fancy: to it are ascribed attributes such as the stalk of the lily, the flowing hair, the austere look. But it rises so much the higher the more simple and seemingly fanciless the expression becomes:

All the other poor generations of this thickly populated, living earth roam and live in obscure enjoyment and indistinct grief of a momentary, limited life, bent down under

necessity's yoke. To us, however, the god has given his most adroit, his fondled daughter. Rejoice! Grant her the dignity that would be accorded the mother of the home! See to it that the old mother-in-law, Wisdom, is not given opportunity to harm the little soul! But I know her sister, the older, more demure, my quiet friend! Would that she might not desert me before the light of my life has been extinguished, this noble doer, consoler, Hope!

The poem entitled *Grenzen der Menschheit*, written in the same vein, is simpler and more profound. Like the other poems from this same period, it has a basic tone of mortal humility. Without warning against arrogance, the poet tells in plain words of the narrow confines within which man is enclosed. If he endeavors to have his head bump into the stars, he loses his sure foothold on earth; if he stands secure on solid earth, he will rise no higher than the oak or the vine. The water of life purls by the feet of the gods in an unbroken stream; but the wave lifts us up and swallows us. Our life is encircled by a ring of diminutive diameter.

As we see, this is the poetry of thought and reflection. The same attributes must be ascribed to the third and most excellent of these poems entitled *Das Göttliche* (1782). It is the poem that begins with the simple but unforgettable words that testify to the greatness of the poet's soul:

Edel sei der Mensch,  
Hilfreich und gut!  
Denn das allein  
Unterscheidet ihn  
Von allen Wesen  
Die wir kennen.

The poem develops, further on, the thought that nature is without feeling: The sun shines on the

just and the unjust; wind and current carry the one as the other along with them. And fortune is just as arbitrary as nature: It lays hold without discrimination and at random. The law of life is unmerciful. Or, as the poem expresses it with a euphony that flatters the ear:

Nach ewigen, ehrnen  
Grossen Gesetzen  
Müssen wir alle  
Unseres Daseins  
Kreise vollenden

at

Man alone is able to distinguish, hate, choose, judge, and give permanence to 'purgement. It is therefore man's duty to be useful and good. It is entirely probable that no greater effect has never been produced by fewer adverbs and simpler means.

Quite the opposite d'cuse of the main poem in this vein and from the same period—that pretentious, carefully versified poem in rhymed octavos entitled *Die Geheimnisse* (1784-85). It was left lying as a brief fragment of a conscientiously planned whole. In and of itself, the meaning of the work is simple enough however poetically unsympathetic the allegorical species of poetry to which it belongs may be. The twelve knights, whom the young clergyman meets while on a tour through the mountains to a splendid convent, were supposed to represent twelve different religions, each of which has had, in its day, its period of flowering and climax. The twelve have now gathered about a single man toward whom they all feel drawn since each of them feels akin to him. Under the name of *Humanus*, Goethe glorified Herder in the loftiest

tones: He had been estranged from the same Herder when the latter, impressed by some discord, or reflecting on the lack of natural harmony there was between him and his friend, began to go his own way. Then it was that Goethe appreciated the significance of Herder all the more. In 1780, Goethe had become a member of the Anna Amalie Lodge of Free Masons; in 1783 he was taken into the Order of the Illuminati.

It seems as if he had laid down in this poem the religious philosophy of Masonry, just as he did later in the other poems, and in the mysterious activity developed by the man in the tower in *Wilhelm Meister*. The cross surrounded by the roses in *Die Geheimnisse* seems to allude to the teachings of the Rosicrucians. The predilection, not so much for mysticism—to which Goethe continued to remain a stranger and to which in time he became almost hostile—as for rummaging around among mysterious things, a tendency that eventually grew pronounced in him, is quite noticeable here. The teaching proclaimed is that of self-restraint, self-control, self-conquest. It is surprising that Goethe felt that such a ponderous apparatus was necessary for so familiar a doctrine.

As an introduction to this unfinished poem, Goethe originally wrote, in the same metre, the poem which at present, under the title of *Zueignung*, serves as introduction to his complete works. It contains a picture of exquisite charm. There is a description of a journey to the edge of a mountain on a dewy morning. The mist rises from the river; the sun seems to be about to break through when, the clouds having been dispelled, the divine form of

a woman is revealed to the wanderer. "Do you not know me?" she asks with an enrapturing voice, "I who have emptied the purest balm into your wounds, and to whom your heart has become more and more firmly attached?" "Yes," he replies, "you gave me rest; you cooled my feverish brow; you gave me the choicest of all earth's gifts. But I shall not repeat your name. For many do that, and each calls you his. When I was a wanderer I had my companions; since I know you I am alone." She stretches forth her hand after the narrow bands of clouds, and in her hand the dew becomes the purest garment: He receives the veil of *poetry* from the hand of *truth*:

Dem Glücklichen kann es an nichts gebrechen,  
Der dies Geschenk mit stiller Seele nimmt:  
Aus Morgenduft gewebt und Sonnenklarheit,  
Der Dichtung Schleier aus der Hand der Wahrheit.

## II

From his early youth Goethe had always kept in close touch with the natural sciences. In Leipzig he had attended lectures on medicine and physics; in Strassburg he had taken the course given by Spielmann on chemistry. And when, a few years later, chemistry began to make such rapid strides, he again took it up: Shortly after his arrival in Weimar we see him studying chemistry. In Jena he had Döbereiner introduce him to the art of determining and calculating chemical compounds according to weight and measurement (*Stöchiometrie*). He also participated in the experiments of Göttling and Buchholtz.

Under the guidance of Loder he studies anatomy and begins as early as 1781 to explain the human skeleton to the pupils in the drawing school at Weimar. Anatomy is one of his favorite disciplines, partly for its own sake, partly because it enables him to understand the human body as the most important object of plastic art. He studies chemistry because, during his mineralogical interests, he has felt hemmed and checked on account of his lack of knowledge of the chemical constituency of bodies, so that he has to lay mineralogy aside until he has caught up. For many years in succession he wanders through Thuringia, studies the Harz and other mountains geologically, mineralogizes and botanizes everywhere, in the middle of the eighties even at Karlsbad. As S. Kalischer has rightly said, "For him no mountain is too high, no well too deep, no passage way in the mines that anyone else has used too low, no cave too labyrinthine." Wherever he goes he studies the botanical gardens, the natural museums and collections. He makes independent observations on every optical phenomenon and draws his own illustrations. He makes collections of stones, plants, bone preparations, all sorts of petrifications, and he himself takes passionate interest in establishing scientific laboratories in Jena.

At every point he begins anew to make observations and increase his experience. In the forests he looks up the foresters, the herb-gatherers, the essence-cookers in order to enter into the mysteries of botany. He associates with the owners of herbariums; he makes observations in his own garden; he reads everything he can get pertaining to botany in the library at Weimar as well as elsewhere.

He approaches his theories of the natural sciences in a practical way during his administration of the crown forests at Weimar, while in control of the university collections at Jena, and while studying statuary. It has already been said above that his studies in mining in Ilmenau did not lead to practical results. The statement is correct, and yet they did accomplish one thing: they initiated him into the science of geology in which field his discoveries (as is also the case in osteology and botany) constitute an enduring contribution to the study of natural science in general.

The scientists of Goethe's time hurt themselves tremendously by the treatment they accorded him in their own field. Posterity has made reparations for his name, though insufficient. Nothing testifies so eloquently to Goethe's genius and to the significance of his artistic activity, to the reality of the characters he produced and the thoughts he thought within various spiritual fields, as his discoveries in the realm of natural science. This is true not simply because they prove the vast compass of his mind, somewhat after the fashion of Pascal. Pascal's greatness as a physicist gives us confidence in his seriousness and ingenuousness as a philosopher of religion. We see his soul grieving under the tortures of existence and clinging to the consolations of a fanciful world. No, the testimony is eloquent, first and foremost because these discoveries give a standard of the depth to which Goethe sounded nature's mysteries in man and beyond man. For, directly contrary to Schiller's philosophy, Goethe conceived of man as in no way contrasted with nature, but always included in it.

Though he never rejoiced over any of his poetic works that chanced to meet with marked success, Goethe cannot help but rejoice over his scientific discoveries—though he is prepared in advance to see them scorned without reason and besmirched without cause. Thus it is that an individual of to-day feels rapture over his astonishingly prophetic eye as a naturalist. Viewing Goethe from this angle, we feel a respect and reverence that are nearly deeper than those evoked by studying his purely poetic creations.

Goethe never enjoyed an especially strong constructive imagination; his *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust* are both imperfectly composed. And yet he had, in a way, a most surprising eye for composition. Think of his genius along this line in the field of plastic art! For the individual who has read his article on Leonardo's *The Last Supper*, the picture from that time on invariably falls into the various groups of three persons each that Goethe pointed out. With regard to nature, this ingenious eye is shown in the discovery of the great laws of composition. And with him composition is related to uninterrupted evolution. The idea of evolution, on which all scientific studies of the nineteenth century are based, had no champion equal to Goethe in the preceding decades.

His poetically designed treatise entitled *Die Natur*, of the year 1780, a series of animated and more or less enraptured aphorisms, is a composite expression of the worship and adoration of nature, motivated if not directly inspired by Spinoza's *Deus sive natura*. The poet attempts to elucidate nature's mysterious being by citing a number of the

contrasts and contradictions involved in a conception of it. There is an express renunciation of the personality of nature as we know it, and yet the author has enough of the poet in him to speak as though familiar with nature's characteristics and methods of procedure. Swinburne expressed himself in precisely the same fashion ninety years later in his poem entitled *Hertha*. That nature is to be presumed as the One and All, compels us to ascribe to it mutually contrasting and excluding propensities and purposes. Its very interminability makes it difficult for us to pass judgment upon it. In Goethe's utterances there is nothing but reverence for nature, a reconciliation with its coldness, and a love for it that is defiant at the mention of the lack of a common measure, and that makes it possible for us to evaluate its being, and man's being as well. Here are a few specimens of these apothegms:

Nature! We are entwined and surrounded by it, incapable of getting out of it, incapable of penetrating it more deeply. It takes us into the circle of its dance, unbidden and unwarned. It drives us along with it until we are tired, exhausted, and fall from its embrace.

It plays a drama; whether it itself sees this, we do not know. And still it plays this drama for us who are standing in the corner.

Its children are innumerable. Toward no one is it everywhere covetous. But it has its favorites, on whom it squanders, to whom it makes great sacrifices. It attaches its protection to greatness.

It envelopes man in the mists of obscurity, and spurs him to light eternal. It makes him dependent upon the earth, lethargic and heavy, and constantly shakes him out of his torpor.

Man obeys its laws even when he opposes them; man works with it even when he works against it.

It has no language, no speech, but it creates tongues and hearts by the help of which it feels and speaks. . . .

Its crown is love. Only through love can one approach it. It creates a gulf between all beings, and everything will consume itself. It has isolated all things in order to bring all things together. With a few drafts from love's beaker, it completely indemnifies one for all trouble. . . .

Past and future it does not know. For it the present is eternity. It is gracious. I praise it, with all its works. It is wise and quiet. No explanation can be wrenched from its body; no gift can be extorted from it that it will not bestow voluntarily. It is cunning, but with good intentions; and it is best not to notice its cunning.

A great deal of this is reminiscent of Spinoza, some of it is soon to be expressed by Hegel, and the last part of it anticipates Schopenhauer. The entire work is a didactic poem in prose and is to be regarded merely as an overture to the strictly scientific investigations and philosophic observations that follow.

Goethe's botanical studies, which led to the discovery of the metamorphosis of plants, have to do with the origin of forms. He finds one single fundamental law working throughout numerous transformations. His whole being, which was borne along on faith in unity in the manifold, on the spiritual bond that unites the apparently heterogeneous, always led him to find unity where others had divided into rubrics. It was by virtue of his ability to draw comprehensive conclusions from scattered though thorough observations that he was the first in geology to give voice to the theory of an ice age, or as he calls it an age of lasting cold, in the prehistoric world.

As a geologist he was the first to understand the

significance of the remains of fossil plants and animals by way of determining the age of the strata of the earth. Quite remarkable in this regard is a letter from him to Merck, October 27, 1782, in which he first explains to his friend that the remains of bones in the upper strata of sand belong to the most recent age, an age, however, which from our present method of reckoning is incalculably old. He says that at that time the elephant and the rhinoceros were indigenous to North Germany, and that their remains have been washed down by mountain streams into the valleys where they are found at present. He also prophesies—and correctly so—that the time will come when one will no longer confound various petrifications with each other; one will arrange them with care according to their relation to the various ages of the earth.

Goethe's sole and remote predecessor in this matter is the Dane, Niels Steensen,<sup>27</sup> who, in 1669, made a distinction between mountains in which organic remains are found and those in which they are not found. This distinction, however, is of relatively little importance in comparison with Goethe's, and Goethe was not familiar with it at the time. He proceeded here, as always, from what he had actually observed with his own eyes. At the close of his sojourn in Strassburg, he climbed, while on a tour through Lorraine, the Bast Mountain,

<sup>27</sup> Brandes wrote these lines in 1915. Four years later he changed them—for the benefit of the German edition—to read as follows: "Goethe's predecessors in this field were Leonardo da Vinci, Bernard Palissy and Niels Steensen. Leonardo did no more than explain the presence of conchyliaceous matter on high mountains. Palissy was as an artist only a mineralogist. Steensen's investigations, like the studies of Leonardo and the investigations of Palissy, remained unknown to Goethe."

—TRANSLATOR.

which consists entirely of mussels, and called to mind—with contempt—Voltaire's mediaeval explanation of this accumulation as a “freak of nature.” He understood that he was standing on an old, dried-up sea-bed.

As an assistant in his geological studies, he employed a young student by the name of Voigt, who drew up a mineralogical map of Weimar and Jena. With it he felt secure; he could give an account of the structure of each mountain and plain. He even had Charpentier's mineralogical chart developed so that it extended from the Harz to the Fichtelgebirge, from the Riesengebirge to the Basalt Mountains of the Rhön. And what is more, he expressed in a letter to Merck his great desire to have a mineralogical map made of the whole of Europe. Such a map would have been of the greatest advantage. Goethe was the first to think of it.

It was granite that held the chief attraction for Goethe as a student of mineralogy. In a letter to Frau von Stein he speaks of being “enraptured by the granites.” He dreams and writes about this *Urstein*, just as he does with regard to the *Urpflanze*. Early in 1784 he dictates his treatise entitled *Ueber den Granit*, one of the choicest bits of German prose ever written: The enormous masses of granite inspired the Egyptian kings with the idea of gigantic works. Pointed columns in honor of the sun, Sphinxes, and Memnon statues testify to their inspiration to this very day. Italian naturalists fancied that the obelisks were erected by a floating mass which, congealed, became granite. But the stone was soon restored to its place of honor. One came to see that granite was the high-

est and the deepest, the foundation of the earth. What captivates Goethe is the manifoldness in the greatest simplicity. For the general situation and the relation of the parts to each other, also the colors, all shift and change with each different mountain; indeed the masses of each individual mountain are often quite different from step to step, while as a whole it is all the same.

Whoever appreciates the attractions that nature's mysteries have for man will not be surprised to learn that I have abandoned the circle of observations I was formerly wont to cultivate and have turned to these with passionate attachment. I do not fear the reproach that it must be the spirit of contradiction which has led me away from observations and portrayals of the human heart, the *youngest, most manifold, most movable, most changeable part of creation, just as it is the easiest to shake*, to observations of nature's *oldest, firmest, deepest, most unshakable son*. For one will surely agree with me that all natural things stand in close connection, and that the seeking mind does not like to be excluded from anything obtainable. Grant me then—I who have suffered and still suffer many things and much from changes in human disposition, from its rapid and incessant mutability, not only in my own case, but in that of others as well—grant me the exalted rest which great, low-voiced nature's mute and lonely presence affords.

This contrasting of the human heart with granite, with a certain predilection for the latter, corresponds quite accurately to the epigramme written by way of self-defense a few years later:

Mit Botanik giebst Du Dich ab, mit Optik? Was thust Du?  
Ist es nicht schöner Gewinn, rühren ein zärtliches Herz?  
Ach, die zärtlichen Herzen! Ein Pfuscher vermag sie zu  
rühren;  
Sei es mein einziges Glück, Dich zu berühren, Natur!

Conspicuous in this little treatise on granite is a sentence which reveals Goethe's feeling for the analogy between this sort of stone, which for him is "the first and firmest beginning of our existence," and what has recently, with reference to the *Urfaust*, been called "the purely elementary, the most profoundly original element in the life of feeling, that which is indissoluble in its eternal simplicity, unshakable and firm as granite." (Page 289) Goethe writes: "So lonely, I say to myself as I look down upon this perfectly barren mountain ridge and glimpse in the distance at its foot a tiny bit of verdant moss, so lonely does man become if he but open his soul to the oldest, the first, the most basic feeling of eternal truth."

There was neither thought nor desire on Goethe's part, however, of allowing his enthusiasm to lead him into conceiving of nature as something firm and fixed, finished and final. From the very first and incessantly he conceives of everything on earth as genesis, formation, transformation, development. He often says that in order to arrive at a living conception of nature we, of and by ourselves, must see to it that we become and continue as movable and formable and pliable as nature itself.

It was entirely clear to him that changes in nature take an incalculable amount of time. In this, as in other points, he anticipates Darwinism. In the contest between the Vulcanists and the Neptunists, a contest that was rife during his day, he always espoused the cause of the Neptunists, it being impossible for him to see how whole mountain ranges could be thrown up over night from a molten and flowing interior. He was, on the contrary,

saturated with and possessed of the idea that changes in nature come about most slowly, most deliberately. Thirty-four years ago I wrote concerning him: "He extends one hand to Thales, the other to Darwin." He himself referred to Thales and compared himself with Thales.

In the second part of *Faust* he has Anaxagoras, a man of eighty years, ask:

Hast Du, O Thales, je in *einer* Nacht  
Solch einen Berg aus Schlamm hervorgebracht?

And he has Thales answer:

Nie war Natur und ihr lebend'ges Fliessen  
Auf Tag und Nacht und Stunden angewiesen;  
Sie bildet regelnd jegliche Gestalt,  
Und selbst im Grossen ist es nicht Gewalt.

We have already seen how addicted the young Goethe was to the use of *Jahrtausend* as a strong expression supposed to portray the strength of the heart's feelings and the senses' yearnings. A few years later *Jahrtausend* has taken on a wholly different, a profounder and a more nearly real significance as the expression for the time that nature requires to effect its transformations.

He patiently tolerates the fact that even Herder, whose *Aelteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts* and *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte*, had developed even him as a naturalist, now mocked at Goethe for going around about with his hammer pecking on mute and silent stones. He is filled with the mission of natural science; predilection for the untrue must be exterminated, and this natural science does. He writes (December 15, 1784) to Knebel: "It teaches and proves that the greatest,

the most mysterious and most magical moves along in a perfectly regular, simple, open fashion; it must in time heal poor unthinking, unknowing men of their thirst for the vaguely supernatural." It is the miracle that he has in mind.

Just as he now, in mineralogy and geology, riveted his attention on the dead, the skeleton in the earth of various lands, just so does he study the human skeleton, and that with great zeal. This leads him to the discovery of the intermaxillary bone in the human skull, the existence of which up to this time had been denied by such leading osteologists as Blumenbach, Sömmering, and the Dutch Camper. A fundamental difference between man and other mammiferous animals was hereby abrogated once for all. One had made a distinct approach to the idea of a common development of all creatures.

On March 27, 1784, he writes from Jena to Charlotte von Stein this felicitous and touching note, the second for that day:

A few lines to my Lotte by way of saying good morning, for unfortunately I shall not be able to say good evening. I have been granted a delightful satisfaction. I have made an anatomical discovery that is at once beautiful and important. You shall also have your share in it. But do not say a word about it. A letter is bringing the news also to Herder under the seal of silence. I am so happy that my heart is moved within me.

Farewell! Oh how I love you! How strongly I feel this in my happy and my dejected moments! Do not answer my note; but let me find a few words from you in my home. Farewell, my Lotte! Everything is going so beautifully with me because you love me.

In the letter to Herder we read:

I have found neither silver nor gold, but I have found

something that gives me unspeakable joy; the *os intermaxillare* in the human skull. With Loder I compared the skull of man with that of an animal, caught the clue, and behold, there it is. . . . It is the keystone to man. It is not lacking; it too is there.

The bone fastened to the upper jaw and on which the incisors rest had been conceded to the ape by some anatomists who denied its existence in the skull of man; and it was precisely this lack that was made to constitute the essential difference between man and the monkey. Goethe could not bring himself to believe in the heterogeneity in the construction of the skeletons of beings that were otherwise so homogeneous. Nor was he satisfied with the mere corroboration of his find. He began a methodical comparison of the form and position of the intermaxillary bone in the skulls of all animals that he could get hold of, even in that of a young Indian elephant that he had had sent to him from Cassel. His monograph entitled *Versuch aus der vergleichenden Knochenlehre, dass der Zwischenknochen der oberen Kinnlade dem Menschen mit den übrigen Thieren gemein sei*, is of uncommon significance in that it is the very first treatise that was ever written on comparative anatomy.

The manuscript with the drawings was sent to Merck, who sent it on to Sömmerring in Cassel, who in turn sent it on to Camper in Holland where it did not arrive, however, until after the expiration of nine months. The manuscript and the tables remained in Holland after Camper's death. They were not returned to Germany—to the Goethe archives—until 1894. Neither of the two scholars would have anything to do with Goethe's proofs.

This was the first great scientific disappointment the discoverer was to suffer. This it was, too, that kept him from publishing his work for so long.

In the meantime he continued his studies; he took up the anatomy of the vertebrae of the neck, from their coalescence into a single bone in the case of the whale to their expansion in the long neck of the giraffe. He planned tables for the comparison of them for each individual vertebrate animal concerned. And just as he in his study of the plant went so far that he could trace the composite forms of the flower and fruit back to a single leaf, just so did he finally hit upon the idea that the skull which surrounds the brain, as well as the vertebral column which surrounds the spinal cord, consists of vertebrae which have undergone a transformation. He thought that he could detect three such vertebrae in the reverse side of the skull: the occiput bone, and the front and back sphenoid. And then it came to pass in 1790, during his second sojourn in Italy, as he was walking along the strand of the Lido beyond Venice he found a sheep's skull so happily broken, for his purpose, that he discovered at once three vertebrae in the skull: the palatal bone, the upper jaw-bone and the intermaxillary bone. By merely seeing it with his own eyes he understood the action of the organs of seeing, hearing and smelling which, transformed, had given these their final shape. This established forever the belief in his mind that was henceforth to constitute at once his strength and his weakness as a naturalist: "That nature conceals no mystery which it does not in this place or that reveal to the naked eye of the attentive observer."

## CHAPTER XXV

### *Prometheus: Spinoza and Lessing*

IN the year 1785 Goethe did not feel so well physically as he had in his younger days. Then it was that he undertook his first journey to Karlsbad which he was to visit so regularly later on in life. On the one hand he was benefited by the water; on the other he found himself surrounded there by a circle of new and vivacious guests. The first time, and also the second, he met there, moreover, the dearest of his friends from the Weimar circle, the Duchess Luise, Herder, and Frau von Stein. As early as 1785 he had thought of fleeing from daily life and taking a journey to Italy. But it was not until his second stay in Karlsbad, in 1786, that he quietly and without revealing his plans to anyone, betook himself southward from the Bohemian watering place and, true to his fondness for mystification, travelled incognito under the name of Möller.

During the period from 1783 to 1786, Goethe again takes up the intensive study of Spinoza, to whom he had formerly said what Dante had said to Vergil: *Tu se' lo mio maestro e'l mio autore.* Spinoza's influence upon him he confessed at all times. The cause of his renewed interest in the great philosopher was Fritz Jacobi's book *Ueber*

*die Lehre des Spinoza* which, to be sure, did not appear until 1785, though Goethe had become familiar with it two years previous to its publication.

This study could not help but have a pronounced influence on Goethe. Its point of departure was a remark made by Lessing concerning Goethe's poem entitled *Prometheus*. Lessing had been dead but a few years. Otherwise inimical to much that Goethe had to say and do, Lessing had declared himself to be quite in agreement with the thought Goethe had set forth in *Prometheus*. Jacobi's book is a queer bit of ratiocination, diffuse in technique, and like everything else that came from Jacobi's hand, it was written in a self-complacent and undisciplined manner. The copy in my own library belonged to Adam Oehlenschläger; he had written his name in it, though he had never cut the leaves. That Oehlenschläger bought it shows, nevertheless, that genuine worth and real importance were attached to it even in later years. The sensation it evoked rested, however, in no way on its intrinsic value: it was due to the fact that, quite to the dismay of Lessing's good friend, Mendelssohn, it revealed Lessing's religious views. Mendelssohn had believed all along that Lessing was loyal to a personal God; now it became clear to him that the author of *Nathan der Weise* was a Spinozist.

In July, 1780, Jacobi had come to Wolfenbüttel to make the personal acquaintance of Lessing. On the first day they spoke of important matters and various persons, moral and immoral, theists and atheists, and Christians. The second day the critic and poet entered Jacobi's room as the latter was engaged in writing some letters. In order to hold

Lessing while thus occupied, Jacobi gave him something to read. Lessing returned it with the questions: "Have you nothing else?" "Yes," replied Jacobi, "here is a poem. You have yourself caused vexation on many an occasion, now you may become vexed in turn." Having read *Prometheus*, Lessing said: "I have not become vexed. I have long been familiar with this." Jacobi remarked: "Do you know the poem?" Lessing said he had never seen it before, but that he found it quite good.

The conversation continued. Jacobi said that he found it good too in its way, otherwise he would never have given it to Lessing:

*Lessing*: I do not quite mean that: the point of view of the poem is also my point of view. The orthodox conceptions of the godhead no longer exist for me; I cannot endure them:  $\epsilon\nu\ \kappa\alpha\ \pi\alpha\nu$  (One and All)! I know of nothing else. That is what the poem aims at, and I must confess that I like it very much. *Jacobi*: Then you agree with Spinoza? *Lessing*: Were I to name myself after someone, I know of no other name.

It is no wonder that this conversation again directed Goethe's attention to the great philosopher who had died more than a hundred years previously (1677), this great philosopher who earlier than any other modern thinker had taught and proved what was Goethe's own conviction: That the truths which science reveals surpass by far the visions and dreams that science annihilates. However scholastic his philosophy was in form, in its content it displayed a hatred of scholasticism and overcame it, just as Goethe in time overcame the pedantic erudition of his day. Spinoza had found the conception of deity inadequate and imperfect, not merely on

the part of the masses but on that of the thinkers as well. He had come to see that it is impossible to give the infinite a finite place; that the godhead must be one and all or nothing; and that the divine, if anything at all, must penetrate all. His God did not create nature, but was nature's being.

Naturally Spinoza did not have the conception of life that he would have had he known modern chemistry and physiology. For him the universe was merely a matter of extension and thought; he never rose to the living and fruitful infinite which history and natural science show us ruling in boundless space. Conceptions such as evolution and progress were foreign to him. The world, as he conceived it, seemed crystalized. But he saw more keenly than anyone the idea that also captivated Goethe's mind—the eternal identity that lies at the basis of passing wave motions. And he converted Goethe's dislike of the supernatural into a hard and fixed conviction.

For Spinoza the supernatural is meaningless: An object outside of nature would be outside of the existent. The prophets of olden times had been men whose knowing and perceiving was of the same type as our own. The quality of being the Son of God had not been the exclusive privilege of one individual. God's Son was the eternal and divine wisdom which revealed itself everywhere, and especially in the mind of man. Without this wisdom, approach to the state of eternal happiness was unthinkable. Spinoza added:

Concerning the codicils of certain churches in this connection, I must expressly remark that I do not understand what they say. They seem to me to speak the same lan-

guage that he uses who would insist that the circle has taken on the nature of the square.

Spinoza, whose motto was not to be surprised, not to be angry, not to mock nor hate nor despise but to understand, fortified Goethe in his basic passion—his impulse to understand.

Even the historical character could not help but arouse his living admiration. This serene and peaceful thinker had done what Goethe in his later years had desired and praised without ceasing: He had renounced; and his renunciation had been markedly different from Goethe's own. The King of France had offered him an annuity; he declined it. The Elector of the Palatinate had offered him a professorship at Heidelberg with the remark that he would be quite free, but with the appended comment that the Prince was convinced that Spinoza would not abuse his great office, with its atmosphere of freedom, to attack the religion of the State. Spinoza replied:

I do not quite understand within precisely what limits I must use this freedom to philosophize, which one is so liberal as to concede me, on the condition that I do not attack the religion of the State.

He declined the offer; he continued to live the most retired sort of life, earning the few pennies he needed from day to day by grinding lenses. Like Goethe, he had loved joy:

It is a superstition to look upon sadness as being something good, and to label everything wicked that causes joy. The Deity would have to be a jealous, envious being if it could find satisfaction in my personal impotence and sufferings. No, the greater joy we feel, the more nearly we attain

unto perfection, and the greater part we have in the exact nature of the Deity.

This and nothing more had been Goethe's gospel for a decade. As early as December, 1774, he had sent Merck the verses beginning, "My old gospel I bring to you once more," and in which he had extolled a joyous nature with all the exuberance of youth:

Wer nicht richtet, sondern fleissig ist  
Wie ich bin and wie du bist,  
Den belohnet auch die Arbeit mit genuss,  
Nichts wird auf der Welt ihm Ueberdruss . . .  
Sieh, so ist Natur ein Buch lebendig,  
Unverstanden, doch nicht unverständlich,  
Denn dein Herz hat viel und gross Begehr  
Was wohl in der Welt für Freude wär,  
Allen Sonnenschein und alle Bäume,  
Alles Meergestad and alle Träume  
In dein Herz zu sammeln mit einander. . . .

Goethe remained true at heart to Spinoza until his very death, however weak and unworthy his bearing became in later years, when it was a question of standing out for academic and religious freedom. Did he not turn away from Fichte when the philosopher was accused of atheism? Did he not become highly incensed, in 1823, over the fact that mixed marriages were being allowed in Weimar between Christians and men of the tribe of Spinoza?

## CHAPTER XXVI

### FIRST EDITION OF HIS COLLECTIVE WRITINGS— JOURNEY TO ITALY: ANTIQUE AND RENAISSANCE

THE longing for Italy to which he had given imperishable expression in Mignon's classical *Kennst du das Land*, in the original draft of *Wilhelm Meister*, had reached the point where it could no longer be subdued. Many difficulties, however, had to be overcome. He had to obtain leave of absence from his Duke, for whom it might be difficult to find a substitute, but who would gain in independence during his absence. He had to tear himself away from Charlotte von Stein and thereby cause her anguish of heart. And he had to devise some means by which he could secure the necessary money to defray his travelling expenses; for the 1200 thalers that constituted his regular salary were quite inadequate. He had, to be sure, come into some revenue from the estate of his father, but he had allowed his mother to retain the largest part of the interest on the capital. He was consequently obliged to see whether he could not derive a measure of income from his writings. According to the plan that had been agreed upon, his collective works would make eight volumes, and his publisher, G. J. Göschen of Leipzig, declared his willingness to pay a stipendium

for the entire edition amounting to 2000 thalers. This was in truth no colossal sum; but with it in hand the journey could be undertaken. Goethe tried in vain to receive more. Göschen asked whether such a sum was an easy matter: "Are two thousand thalers a mere bagatelle?"

As matters finally eventuated, it was shown that it would have been quite impossible for Göschen to have advanced a larger royalty: he did not cover expenses as it was. The first volume came out in 1787, the last in 1790. The writings were published by subscription: There were 602 subscribers in the whole of Germany. Of the first four volumes, there were sold in addition 536 copies, 487 of the fifth, 417 of the eighth. Single editions had not been more successful. Of *Werthers Leiden* 262 copies were sold, 20 of *Götz*, 17 of *Clavigo*, 312 of *Iphigenie*, 377 of *Egmont*, 326 of *Die Mitschuldigen*, and 198 of *Die Vögel*. It is not known precisely how many copies of *Faust*, *Ein Fragment* were disposed of. This was the end of the sales. All in all, Göschen had lost 1720 thalers by his undertaking.

This is to be laughed at and to be wept over. But Spinoza has warned us against both laughing and weeping; and he has exhorted us to comprehend. He who is at all familiar with contemporary judgment and contemporary opinion comprehends this without difficulty.

## II

Salve magna parens frugum, Saturnis tellus,  
magna virum: tibi res antiquae laudis et artis  
ingredior, sanctos ausus recludere fontes.

*Vergilius: Georgicon II, 73.*

Everything that was unnorthern in Goethe, such as love of the sun and clarity and large lines, passion for the plastic and the cultivation of beauty, everything in his nature, as it had been developed, that was akin to Antique, such as his appreciation of the dignified, his detestation of grimaces, his love for simplicity, calm, greatness—all of this drew him on irresistibly to Italy. He knew the country as one knows a person that one admires and loves from mere correspondence, without personal acquaintance. And it came about that the actual sight surpassed all expectation and influenced him so strongly that the traveller soon felt that he was on the point of undergoing a complete change, a rejuvenation; he felt charmed and strengthened.

There was in him the inner sun that yearned for the cloud-free sun in the sky. As he himself (after Plotinus) said:

Wär' nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,  
Die Sonne könnt' es nie erblicken.

There was in him also the classical sense for measure and moderation, for balance and sanity which, by way of illustration, had made it easily possible for him entirely to avoid exaggeration in Mignon's song, had made it possible for him to

glorify the Italy he had never seen without using a single superlative:

Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht  
Die Myrthe *still* und *hoch* der Lorbeer steht.

It was the natural scenery and the venerable art of Italy that attracted him. For the history of the country he had far less appreciation. It was not as history, but as clear and ordered beauty that the Antique delighted him.

We recall young Wolfgang's perfervid enthusiasm for Gothic as the national German type of architecture with which Italy had nothing to compare. Now he has turned his back on Gothic. He has wheeled his preference about somewhat as one would turn a fiery charger. Gothic has become contrary to his nature, just as every outcrop of religiosity repelled him. The Greek temple rises before his eyes as the home of beauty and the incarnation of all that is sacred. And his love of antique art is not inferior to his reverence for the antique temple.

The embryo of this transformation must be sought in Goethe's studies in nature. He had followed his sound idea of a fundamental type. Through his discoveries in osteology he had seen his belief in the unity between the vertebrate animal and man corroborated. In what he was pleased to term the *Urpflanze* he searched for the plant type which convinced him of unity in all species of diversity. In every field of nature that he investigated he had found unbreakable, undeviating laws. Could he not find similar laws in art? Is it possible that art alone is exposed to pure arbitrariness? He felt

that in the antique he would meet the same idea of the typical that he had met in nature: a rigid exclusion of the unqualifiedly accidental. The human figure, in the classical drama for example, could be traced back to single, simple forms such as Iphigenie, Antigone, Philoctetes, Neoptolomus, the sacrificed woman, the virgin who follows the law of the heart, the proud man offended, the erring though noble youth. It would be possible to condense their spiritual essence into something typical; they were all placed in simple situations that redeemed their entire power.

He began to look with disfavor on his earlier impetuous and irregular productions. He finds his poetic form at present in law-abiding verse, in the consistent iambic pentameter. He begins to revise his prose dramas; to rewrite them in this form. He seeks with undaunted and unabated constancy antique themes, characters such as Achilles, Nausikaa, Palaeophron, Epimenides. He reverts with ever increasing frequency to ancient classical verse forms. Even such thoroughly national material as *Hermann und Dorothea*, or the Mediaeval beast epic *Reineke Fuchs*, he is planning to treat, in the future, in Greek hexameters.

Gothic has now become so contrary to his nature that in his *Italienische Reise*, composed of his letters and diaries for the years 1786-88, and compiled during the years 1816-17 and 1829, he has not a word to say regarding the Gothic churches; he is silent concerning the picturesque palaces in Verona with their Mediaeval stamp. Nor does he have a word to say concerning the Venetian Gothic

of the palaces along the Grand Canal. And what has always seemed to me astonishing, if not preposterous, is the fact that he could not prevail upon himself to visit the conventional church in Assisi which, with its crypt and Giotto's frescoes, is perhaps the most marvelous church in all Italy. Yet he loses himself in observations on, even explorations of, the church of Maria della Minerva, the facade of which is the remains of an ancient temple of Minerva, a temple with no artistic value and one which the modern visitor who has read Goethe's enthusiastic description views with wonderment. Even Paul Sabatier, honorary citizen of Assisi and author of the life of St. Francis of Assisi, who knows the city as no one else knows it, and who once showed the author of these lines through it, could see nothing remarkable or in any way worthy about it. It was, to be sure, the original remains of a temple of olden times that Goethe saw.

By 1786 he had come to feel about as Emperor Julian the Apostate felt fourteen hundred years earlier. Any Christian monument had become to him a horror. On this account he writes with the chill of declination:

The monstrous substructures of the church piled over each other in Babylonian fashion where St. Francis lies I passed by in apathy.

There is no doubt but that his aversion to Christianity dates far back in his life. The sole discordant note between him and Herder after their association in Strassburg arises in this connection. Goethe, in the spirit of youth, replies to Herder

upon the latter's having sent him two monographs of religious content by saying that he is out of sympathy with that kind of topics, for the whole teaching of Christ appeals to him as such a sham (*Scheinding*) that his wrath, not his interest, is aroused. To Charlotte von Stein he writes (April 6, 1782): "Here is a sheet of Lavater's *Pilate*. I have no comment to make. I am so tired of the story of this good Jesus that I could not endure hearing it from anyone, except perhaps from Him Himself." But this aversion had, earlier in his life, been united with an interest in various forms of Christianity, with pietism (Fräulein von Klettenberg) as well as with mysticism (Emanuel Swedenborg). This interest returns in Goethe's old age. *Faust* closes in a Catholic fashion, and Goethe as an older man allows himself to be led on by the Boisserée brothers into collecting convent and church paintings from earlier times. But now, standing as he is at the bright meridian of his life, he is a Pagan through and through. If he praises anything it is because it reminds him of the Antique; if he finds fault with anything it is because he sees in it a deviation from the basic principles of the Antique or from the spirit of Greek heathendom.

But what pleasure he had taken in the Dutch paintings in the days of his early youth! He studied them, as we saw above, so zealously in Dresden that he hardly had time to pay even a short visit to the section on Antique art. But the Antique arose slowly to an all-controlling place in his mind. Oeser's admiration for Winckelmann and Winckelmann's own doctrines again emerge in his mind.

In contrast to the battle-cry of *Natur und Frei-*

*heit* from the *Götz* period, Winckelmann had set up the shibboleth of *Edle Einfalt und stille Grösse* which he has found in the works of the Greeks and which he, like Thorvaldsen<sup>28</sup> later, knew or felt almost entirely through what was found of late Roman art.

The degree to which Goethe had been obsessed by Winckelmann is shown by his original attitude toward the Italian Renaissance on his arrival in Italy. He travels through Florence, the inexhaustible treasure house of Renaissance art, with a stop of only three hours; he has no desire to see the city. He longs for Rome, that is to say, he longs for the Antique. And no less significant is his attitude toward Michael Angelo. When he first became acquainted with him in November, 1786, he is so overwhelmed by the master's virility that not even nature makes a good impression on him. In July, 1787, he even ranks Michael Angelo higher than Raphael. But his name soon disappears from Goethe's letters and after the initial storm of emotions awakened by Michael Angelo has subsided he reverts to the immutable calm of that art from which he had deduced his doctrines concerning the law-abiding principles of all art. This he finds solely in the Antique and in Raphael as descending from the Antique.

During his second sojourn in Rome he has no desire to revisit Michael Angelo; he praises anew,

<sup>28</sup> Berthel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844) went to Italy in 1796. He arrived in Rome March 8, 1797, just as Canova was at the height of his popularity. He modelled a Jason which received the unstinted praise of Canova, and from that time on his success was assured—and his type of art determined. He remained in Italy for twenty-three years.

—TRANSLATOR.

and that in the loftiest tones, the Apollo of Belvedere, that slightly affected Roman lord whose beauty, as he sees it, "transcends all conception." Michael Angelo's art of passion no longer corresponds to his ideal; this he finds in the colossal heads of the Jupiter of Otricoli and the Juno of Ludovisi, castings of both of which he was careful to buy for his private collections.

It is well to note that it is only a section of Hellenism that he understands. It is not the irreconcilably tragic, nor the Dionysian, nor the wild joy in combat, which in the next century came to light in the form of Pergamenian art, that faintly reminds him of Michael Angelo. It is a diluted, a feebler harmony that he grasps. Consequently he could find this harmony in such tame artists as Raphael Mengs—and Angelica Kaufmann, for whom he has both love and appreciation.

Since the Renaissance was, among other things, a revivification of the Antique in art, literature, politics and especially in religion with broadsides aimed at the Church and Christendom, Goethe's predilection for certain phases of it is directly due to his visionary enthusiasm for the Antique. In the art of painting, Raphael, with his easy and simple harmonies, continues to be Goethe's hero. He had studied him when a young man. His St. Caecilie in Bologna, the first painting by Raphael that he saw during his stay on Italian soil, has for him the characteristic of genuine art in that it calms the storm and allays the passions.

Goethe has a violent aversion for all pictures of martyrs; he rejoices in Raphael's portrayal of the human out and out. Concerning the art on the

Christian martyrs he says: "One is forever in the hall of anatomy, at the scaffold, near the potter's field. We have the sufferings of the hero without end; we lack and miss action; we look in vain for present interest; there is always something that is fantastically expected. We deal with malefactors or saints, criminals or fools." He detests these men in armor who kneel with folded hands awaiting a blissful resurrection.

He sees in Raphael the man who loved life for life's sake, and preferred the joy of life to all art and renown. Goethe, who never did go in for grave-visiting and to whom the study of any sort of relics was foreign, makes a pilgrimage to Raphael's tomb and admires the perfect form of his skull, just as he later did in the case of Schiller. As late as 1816 he prefers Raphael's paintings to all other art; he even places him—significant enough because of the kind of proof—above the two greatest masters of the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo. He even holds up against Michael Angelo such a trifle as the fact that he wasted time and talents in the marble-quarry. Without feeling the pronounced similarity between the versatile da Vinci and himself, he cites against him the fact that he toiled far too much with the technical. The equilibrium in Raphael's mind, this talent that flows from the source as from the freshest fount, is absolutely in accord with Goethe's own heart.

It is quite significant—though it has been frequently noted—that while other poets choose their themes from periods that lie far apart, Goethe treats themes only from the Antique and the Renaissance.

Schiller, for example, has his dramas take place in the years 1300, 1400, 1500, 1600 (*Tell, Jungfrau von Orleans, Die Braut von Messina, Wallenstein*). Goethe takes his material at times from his own age, to be sure, (*Clavigo* and the dramas on the Revolution), but his Götz, Egmont, Tasso, even the legendary figure of Faust, all belong to the sixteenth century.

The degree to which the paintings of the Renaissance were burned in on Goethe's mind is shown, among other works, in *Faust*, Part II. Correggio's blissful painting, *Leda and her Playmates*, is described twice. The first time is when Homunculus awakens to life:

Schön umgeben—klar Gewässer  
Im dichten Haine; Frau'n, die sich entkleiden,  
Die Allerliebsten—das wird immer besser.  
Doch Eine lässt sich glänzend unterscheiden  
Aus höchstem Helden, wohl aus Götterstamme,  
Sie setzt den Fuss in das durchsicht'ge Helle.

The second is when Faust stands by the river Peneios:

Von allen Seiten hundert Quellen  
Vereinen sich im reinlich hellen  
Zum Bade flach vertieften Raum.  
Gesunde, junge Frauenglieder  
Vom feuchten Spiegel doppelt wieder,  
Ergötztem Auge zugebracht,  
Gesellig dann und fröhlich badend,  
Erdreistet schwimmend, furchtsam watend,  
Geschrei zuletzt und Wasserschlacht.

Leda and the Swan in Correggio's portrayal has apparently gained control of Goethe's fancy.

Even the closing tableau in *Faust*, Part II, is an

exact reproduction of three paintings from Giotto's school from the fourteenth century on the wall of the Campo Santo in Pisa. The song of the Holy Anchorites

Woge nach Woge spritzt,  
Höhle, die tiefste, schützt,  
Löwen, die schleichen stumm  
Freundlich um dich herum.

is nothing but a poetic translation of a painting from the pre-Renaissance which Goethe saw on his journey.

Of the Italian thinkers of the Renaissance, Goethe was strongly influenced by Giordano Bruno, whose enthusiasm for the All-Unity of God and the Universe he had defended as early as 1771 against Pierre Bayle's attack. These verses are almost a translation from Bruno:

Was wär' ein Gott, der nur von aussen stiesse,  
Im Kreis das All am Finger laufen liesse!  
Ihm ziemt's, die Welt im Innern zu bewegen.

Of the poets of the Italian Renaissance, Goethe placed, as his *Tasso* shows, a high estimate on Ariosto. Dante, with his gloomy pathos, was far removed from him, and Petrarch, with his purely spiritual love for Laura, was contrary to his very nature.

If the Italian Renaissance stands far closer to his heart than the German or Dutch Renaissance, it must be said that the latter contained much that he admires and some things that he loves. Though indifferent to Holbein and Cranach, he never failed to rank Albrecht Dürer very high. He who trans-

lated the blatant and boastful but doughty Benvenuto Cellini was perfectly capable of estimating Dürer's inner loyalty to reality and his true-hearted fullness of feeling.

Among the Northern poets of the Renaissance he loved the neo-Latin poet of the *Küsse*, Johannes Secundus of the Netherlands. This is shown in the above mentioned poem entitled *Liebesbedürfnis*, especially as it reads in the letter to Frau von Stein:

Lieber, heiliger, grosser Küsser,  
Der Du mir's in lechzend athmender  
Glückseligkeit fast vorgethan hast,  
Wem soll ich's klagen, klag ich dir's nicht!

To whom should he complain, if not to Johannes, of what he suffers because of his chapped lips in being prevented from putting them to the mouth of his sweetheart?

In his polemic relation to the Church, Goethe felt related to the bellicose Latin Humanists, Reuchlin, Erasmus, Hutten, and Sickingen. Especially in his later years, when Pastor Pustkuchen published his *Wanderjahre* in opposition to Goethe's, did he make an appeal to them:

Reuchlin! Wer will sich ihm vergleichen,  
Zu seiner Zeit ein Wunderzeichen!

He closes by saying:

Denn gegen die obscuren Kutten  
Die mir zu schaden sich verquälen,  
Auch mir kann es an Ulrich Hutten  
Und Franz von Sickingen nicht fehlen.

His whole life long Goethe felt akin in spirit to the Renaissance. When he abandons the cultivation

of reason from the age of Enlightenment, he does it, not as smaller minds, with the re-introduction of the belief in revelation, but with many-sided reason and artistic fancy in unbreakable union. He stands before us as the Renaissance raised to the second power, a regeneration of Renaissance in individual form.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

NEW POETIC STYLE; *Iphigenie* IN VERSE—COMPLETION OF *Egmont*—WORK ON *Faust*—  
*Iphigenie in Delphi*; *Nausikaa*

THROUGH his incognito Goethe wished to make it possible to have all of his time for himself while in Italy: He wished to waste the precious hours neither in accepting honors, nor in paying calls on other people. His incognito was preserved, however, except at the very first, with anything but severity. What strikes an individual of the twentieth century is the fact that he so arranged his life while in Italy that it meant only a local absence from Germany. In reality, his surroundings were German; his companions were Germans. There was no thought of association with the Italian people, to say nothing of Italian society and intelligence. He lived in the company of such mediocre German painters as Bury, Lips, Hackert, and Angelica Kauffmann. During his entire sojourn in Rome he lived in the home of the painter Tischbein, a man whom he had previously known only through correspondence. Tischbein acted fraternally toward him. He painted that stilted picture of Goethe, resting in the Campagna, clad in white with a broad rimmed hat, surrounded by fragments from the period of classical antiquity—a base relief, the capital of a column, and so on.

His guide in Rome was a resident German student of art, Hofrat Reiffenstein. He undertook the journey to Sicily in the company of the German painter Kniep. He associated intimately with Karl Philipp Moritz, author of the well-known novel entitled *Anton Reiser*. He was frequently in the company of that German-Swiss citizen and inept artist, Heinrich Meyer. He shared and adopted Meyer's not wholly irrational views on art. During his second stay in Rome he associated with the painter Schütz and the above-mentioned friend of his youth, Christoph Kayser, who had set some of his songs and operettas to music, and who now composed the score to *Scherz, List und Rache*. Even the Duchess Giovane, with whom he became acquainted, was a German princess.

Had he not, during his second sojourn in Rome, entered into a cordial relation with a beautiful Milanese Maddalena Ricci, who, however, soon became engaged to an Italian, he would have lived exclusively in intimate association with Germans. His Italian circle of acquaintances would have consisted solely of young and flippant individuals, except for a few relatively important personages such as the Neapolitan jurist, Gaetano Filangieri and his queer sister, an opulent Principessa, who did not set a very high price on social deportment, though she did on him. By way of exception Goethe interests himself in the original of the charlatan Cagliostro and consequently looks up the family Balsamo in Palermo.

Along with his work connected with familiarizing himself with the art treasures, he acquires and appropriates mementos and paintings; and along with

his constant acquirement of Italian natural scenery through sketches of landscapes and figures, he is daily occupied with the re-reading and revision of his collective works for the Göschen edition, of which only four volumes were ready for publication when he left for Italy.

One of the domains in which young Wolfgang's conception of liberty had undergone a complete transformation was that of poetic style. It was in the name of freedom that the literary revolution against Greco-French classicism had taken place. But there was soon awakened in Goethe an aversion toward the old Germanic gruffness and formlessness in *Götz*, an aversion to the loose and lax form of *Werther*. By way of liberation from his stylelessness and formlessness, he had resorted to Hellenic material, to old Greek style. In the later sonnet, *Natur und Kunst*, he gave his new conviction an imperishable expression. He shows that nature and art seem to avoid each other, but if we cultivate art seriously, nature can glow freely in our hearts.

So ist's mit aller Bildung auch beschaffen:  
Vergebens werden ungebundne Geister  
Nach der Vollendung reiner Höhe streben.

Wer Grosses will, muss sich zusammenraffen;  
In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister,  
Und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben.

First of all he took up *Iphigenie*, and by the turn of the year 1786-87 he had rewritten the drama in beautiful iambics, pentametric as in Lessing's *Nathan*, though just as melodious as Lessing's are clear. The form here is so perfect, the measure

is so simple and full, that many of these verses which express merely some humble, unimportant idea have become expressions that have been repeated time out of mind. There is Thoas's verse:

Du sprichst ein grosses Wort gelassen aus.

Other verses express a simple picture which has never been forgotten:

Doch es schmiedete  
Der Gott um ihre Stirn ein ehern Band.

Or take these two argumentative verses:

*Thoas:* Es spricht kein Gott, es spricht Dein eigen Herz.  
*Iphigenie:* Sie reden nur durch unser Herz zu uns.

The scene between Orestes and Iphigenie, which opens the third act, is pure music. Read this appeal to the gods that flows from Iphigenie's lips:

Habt Ihr nur darum mich so manches Jahr  
Von Menschen abgesondert, mich so nah  
Bei Euch gehalten, mir die kindliche  
Beschäftigung, des heil'gen Feuers Gluth  
Zu nähren, aufgetragen, meine Seele  
Der Flamme gleich in ew'ger, frommer Klarheit  
Zu Euren Wohnungen hinaufgezogen,  
Dass ich nur meines Hauses Gräuel später  
Und tiefer fühlen sollte?

The care with which Goethe has striven to keep the style antique is clearly shown by a slight change in this scene. In the older text, Iphigenie uses the expression *Gnade* as coming from Jupiter—she means Zeus. Here the word is changed into *Erfüll-*

*lung*, a conception that is pre-Christian and corresponds to hope:

So steigst du denn, Erfüllung, schönste Tochter  
Des grössten Vaters endlich zu mir nieder!

There is in this text, in which every sentence, indeed every word, was weighed, balanced and refined for so many years, a concentration, an inimitable fullness, and an enrapturing rhythm, despite the fact that the verses are unrhymed. In this way, and in truth for this reason, the simplest picture is indelibly stamped on our mind. Take the case of Orestes when he speaks of the furies.

Doch hör ich aus der Ferne hier und da  
Ihr grässliches Gelächter. Wölfe harren  
So um den Baum, auf den ein Reisender  
Sich rettete.

The lyric element breaks through, not merely in the various passages in which the metre has been changed so as to take on the form appropriate to an anthem or a song, but also where it is unmodified in order to give expression to purity of soul, spiritual elevation and unqualified refinement of feeling. A case in point is when Thoas asks Iphigenie whether she believes that the unpolished Scythians are capable of responding to the voice of humanity. She replies in these light and easy lines:

Es hört sie jeder  
Geboren unter jedem Himmel, dem  
Des Lebens Quelle durch den Busen rein  
Und ungehindert fliest.

These verses contain the lofty and beautiful moral of the drama. Of it, Hypolite Taine, one of the

most excellent critics of art that ever lived, said: "I place no modern work above *Iphigenie auf Tauris* by Goethe."

In his *Philosophy of Art* Taine says that the drama is beautiful even in prose and infinitely more so in verse. The introduction of rhythm and metre has given the work the matchless accent, sublime clarity, and broad tragic tone at the sound of which the mind rises above the flat tasks of everyday life and sees before its eye the heroes of olden times. We behold the race of primitive souls long since forgotten, and among them the majestic maiden, the guardian of the law and benefactress of man, in whom all goodness and all nobility in human nature are concentrated to the glorification of our race and the uplifting of our fallen courage.

## II

Goethe had now outgrown not simply the loose, indefinite form but also the bombastic, overflowing sentimentality that flourished in *Die Geschwister* as well as in *Werther*. He feels more and more the necessity of cutting himself off from, and reacting against, men's familiar importunity. He was a born aristocrat and had simply, as a result of a misunderstanding of his own frank genius, allowed himself to be misled into making acquaintances with anybody and everybody.

The latest hero of freedom to emerge in his mind was, as we have seen, the Netherland nobleman, Egmont, Prince of Gaure. How distinguished in comparison with Götz, how aristocratically amiable, how entirely care-free in his self-complacency! His

noble, fruitful nature with its easy blood, which feels itself elevated above that of other people as above the morals of other people, becomes the Fate by which he allows himself to be led and driven. He is almost passive, and yet a brave man. He is a lover of liberty, though one does not see him fighting for it with the violent blows of a mailed fist.

He is an enchanter, beloved of all. But he is most wholesomely appreciated by a plain, pert little girl, who loves him more than all the others combined. His conception of liberty is different from that of Götz; it is less narrow. His relation to Clärchen is of a part with his idea of liberty.

The drama as a drama is without suspense and without conflict. Not all of the leading characters are entirely worthy of Goethe. Alba is far too loquacious. A little reminiscence of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* will show who inspired the vigorous and lively folk scenes. The characters are firmly and clearly drawn. Clärchen is one of the most charming personages known to the records of dramatic poetry. It will be as impossible to forget her as it will be impossible to forget Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, Raphael's Sistine Madonna, Shakespeare's Imogene. The choicest part of her delineation is contained in what is not said. Schiller was right when he wrote the excellent epigramme:

Jeden andern Meister erkennt man an dem, was er ausspricht;  
Was er weise verschweigt, zeigt mir den Meister des Stils.

Shakespeare himself scarcely has a series of remarks and replies, which from the point of view of finesse and eloquence, can measure up to the pauses in the

following. Egmont has depicted the Regentess, Margarete von Parma:

*Clärchen*: A majestic woman! I was almost afraid to go near her.

*Egmont*: You are not usually timid. Probably it was not fear; probably it was only virgin modesty.

*Clärchen*: (Casts her eyes to the ground, seizes his hand, and leans against him.)

*Egmont*: I understand you! You dear girl! You may raise your eyes again!

If Clärchen is not maid, then she is woman in all that the latter term implies.

The words *Freudvoll und leidvoll*, already referred to, have been, as it were, inscribed on the tablets of love. Egmont deserves Clärchen's love. The Egmont whom Goethe begins to create in Italy, and into whose heart he again works himself, is not the historical character. He did not owe his King enormous sums, nor was he bound to him by such means; nor is he the father of a family with eleven children, such as Schiller, in his opinionated critique, would have preferred to see portrayed. The taking off of this Egmont would have been a feast of tears to the masses; they would have revelled in sentimental weeping when they saw him snatched from his good wife and eleven little ones! Concerning this irritating review, Goethe wrote to the Duke in a tone of dry accuracy:

The reviewer has perhaps analyzed the moral part of the work quite well; so far as the poetry of the drama comes into question, however, he might have left something for others to do.

Egmont has not become the father of a family. Nor is he in any sense of the word an effeminate,

effervescent lover like Werther, or Fernando, or even Clavigo. He is a man. He is more loved than loving. His little friend is the unreserved object of his tenderness, but deep down in his soul she occupies him no more than Gretchen occupies Faust. Faust is so little taken up with Gretchen that she succumbs because he does not follow her fate. Even when he sees the vision on the Brocken, the young woman with the red line about her neck, she and her misfortune never occur to him. Egmont remains, despite all warnings and prayers, in Brussels when Alba enters with his army. It was reasonable to expect that he would do this because he could not live without Clärchen; he did not wish to be separated from her. Goethe must have seen this motif and rejected it. She plays absolutely no rôle in his final determination.

And yet Goethe was fully, deeply conscious of her worth. Without paying any attention to the doubts that arose on all sides, he transformed her after her death into the Goddess of Liberty. She appears in this capacity to Egmont, consoles him in his last dream and extends to him the laurel wreath. Consequently he can say on awakening: I die for the liberty for which I have lived and fought and for which I now offer my life. So serious was Goethe's love of political liberty, and so forceful his expression of it immediately preceding the French Revolution. After this there follows a long period of eclipse until this love of liberty finds expression for the last time in the above quoted words which are placed on the lips of the dying Faust.

## III

In the *Italienische Reise*, March 1, 1788, Goethe tells of his deliberations anent the last three volumes of his collective works. He has just laid out the plan of his *Faust*, and he places complete confidence in the success of this operation. He admits that the writing of the drama is, naturally, a quite different affair from what it was fifteen years ago, though he feels certain that he has again found the thread:

And so far as the tone of the whole work is concerned, I am at peace. I have already worked out a new scene, and if I smoke the paper I believe that it will be impossible for anyone to distinguish it from the old ones. Since I, by reason of my long rest and isolation, have been restored to my former level of existence, I am indeed struck by the similarity to my old self, and by the slight impression that years and events have made on my soul.

Goethe deceived himself very much indeed. The scenes which he added, in Italy, to the manuscript, to the oldest plan that he had taken along, resemble the former ones neither in spirit nor in tone.

In the first place, there is the *Hexenküche* scene, in which the drinking of the magic potion effects Faust's rejuvenation, a plan that was originally never once thought of. Even the metre is no longer the rhymed doggerel but rhymed iambic pentameters. The scene is peculiarly introduced with Mephistopheles's rationalistic explanation of the possibility of rejuvenation. There is a certain strife between all the ghosts and all the phantastic beings that commingle in the witches' kitchen, the speaking monkeys of both genders, and Mephistopheles's later reply

to Faust's question as to whether nature combined with art can not devise a better means of relieving him of thirty years than the foolish advice, buttressed on magic, of an old woman. He replies: Of course, you need, if you so desire, neither physician nor sorcery nor money. Take a hoe and a shovel, dig in the earth, manure it and cultivate it and live on plain food, that is the best way to rejuvenate yourself. And when Faust can not be prevailed upon to go in for this sort of simple life, then and not till then, Mephistopheles resorts to the witch.

When the witch accordingly arrives and no longer recognizes her lord and master, modernized Satan that he is, hornless, hoofless and tailless, and when Mephistopheles in his embitterment causes her a fearful fright, Goethe uses an expression which shows plainly that the scene was written in the South, under circumstances and in surroundings that caused all inconsistencies in nature to appear as a bit of mere superstition known only to the land of fog.\* By way of expressing his liberation from all the antiquated apparatus, Mephistopheles says:

Das *nordische* Phantom ist nun nicht mehr zu schauen.

In order to motivate the attraction that Faust is soon to feel for a young girl, Goethe lets him see in a magic mirror an ideal picture of a woman, perhaps a form of Helena such as appears in *Faust II*. Even in the old saga, which constitutes the basis, as also in Marlowe's *Faust*, this ideal woman is united with Faust. What, however, is more probable, is that she is a reminiscence of the irreproachably beautiful woman whom Goethe saw disrobed, and whom

he described in the *Schweizerreise*, for the words that he uses here recall what took place there:

Ist's möglich, ist das Weib so schön!

And strangely enough—as though Goethe had forgotten in those days the significance that Gretchen soon acquired for Faust, and how strongly his yearning for her is awakened—in the scene *Wald und Höhle*, the second important scene that he wrote in Italy, Faust speaks in his monologue, not of the little girl from the middle class, the leading character of the entire tragedy, but of the magic picture in the mirror as of that to which his longing now tends. He is vexed because Mephistopheles arouses his senses and exclaims:

Er facht in meiner Brust ein wildes Feuer  
Nach *jenem schönen Bild* geschäftig an.

By "that beautiful picture" he evidently means not the living Gretchen, but the ideal picture in the magic mirror, the one that has just been portrayed though it never again appears in the entire work. Attention has already been drawn to the lack of agreement between the leading part of the scene and the close that we have in the old manuscript.

And finally there is a scene of some few pages that was written in Italy and inserted before the scenes between Mephisto and the student. It is only a fragment, the close of the rich and magnificent double scene between Faust and Mephisto in the latter's various forms as a poodle, as a wandering scholar, and as an aristocratic squire in a bright

red, gold embroidered costume. This fragment begins, strangely enough, with the words:

*Und was der ganzen Menschheit zugetheilt ist.*

In the completed *Faust*, Part I, which was published twenty years later, in 1808, there are four lines that run as follows:

Mein Busen, der vom Wissensdrang geheilt ist,  
Soll keinen Schmerzen künftig sich verschliessen,  
Und was der ganzen Menschheit zugetheilt ist,  
Will ich in meinem innern Selbst geniessen.

The last two lines existed at least twenty years before the first two with which they rhyme.

The result is that just as carefully as the line of separation has been erased, just so little is it possible to say that the same idea is being discussed before and after the line of separation. When Goethe was sixty years old, he was confronted with the task of finding a beginning to the proposition with the lines that rhymed with *Zugetheilt ist* and with *geniessen*; and this he has certainly succeeded in doing.

Apparently the two propositions correspond quite well to each other; the first two lines treat of care, the last two of joy. But if we look more carefully we see that it does not work out exactly right.

My bosom which is completely cured of longing after knowledge, shall in the future not be closed to grief. This is the gist of the appended beginning.

But the close, which Goethe wrote on Italian soil, said a great deal more: "And everything that falls to the lot of humanity as a whole I will enjoy within my inner self." This includes both the good and

the bad, both joy and sorrow. Were it simply this slight formal contradiction that arose it would not be so bad. But a new, a more serious difficulty appeared when the addition was made. The new Faust is disgusted with all his knowledge, has lost his impulse to final knowledge in the possibility of which he no longer believes, and yearns only after the satisfaction of his sensual passions:

Des Denkens Faden ist zerrissen,  
Mir ekelt lange vor allem Wissen.  
Lass in den Tiefen der Sinnlichkeit  
Uns glühende Leidenschaften stillen!

The original Faust, with whom Goethe sympathized even in Italy, yearned on the contrary to comprehend the very soul of the universe, and so to develop his power of thinking and manner of feeling that he could think through all the thoughts of men, and feel their feelings after them:

Mit meinem Geist das Höchst' und Tiefste greifen  
Ihr Wohl und Weh auf meinen Busen häufen,  
Und so mein eigen Selbst zu ihrem Selbst erweitern,  
Und, wie sie selbst, am End' auch ich zerscheitern.

He is much more intellectual than the later Faust. Mephistopheles has to use all the knowledge at his command, he has to exploit his full store of eloquence, when he attempts to show Faust the impossibility of obtaining what he is striving after, to wean him away from reason and science, and to fill him with insatiable desire for worthless mundane joys.

The brief monologue itself in which he does this is a masterpiece of felicitously turned phrases all of

which go to show the prohibitive difficulties the individual man has in approaching the infinite. However many of the treasures of the human mind Faust has succeeded in appropriating, he feels no new power welling forth from his inner being; he finally accepts, with a display of despondence, Mephistopheles's warning against the futility of speculation.

It is nevertheless exceedingly hard to separate, with perfect accuracy, those parts of the beginning of *Faust* that were written at that time from those that were added or expanded preparatory to publishing the finished work in 1808.

Parts of what was published last of all were in high probability written many years before. It does not seem to me to be likely that Faust's desire to translate the text of the Bible into his *geliebtes Deutsch* belongs to the time after the writing of the twenty-ninth and seventy-seventh Venetian epigrams. Their caustic and repeated sallies apropos of the difficulties arising from a poetic treatment of the German language—which is referred to unreservedly as *der schlechteste Stoff*—are not in favor of such an assumption.

On looking through the old, yellow, moldy manuscript Goethe was persuaded that emendations were in order: He toned down the expressions that appealed to him as being too gruff and gross. Gretchen's marvelous monologue at the spinning wheel—*Meine Ruh ist hin*—underwent a slight change that may be considered in the light of an improvement only from the point of view of prosody. For the words

Mein Schoos, Gott! drängt  
Sich nach ihm hin

we have the more abstract and quite academic

Mein *Busen* drängt  
Sich nach ihm hin.

It is perhaps on reading Faust's great monologue that we become most clearly conscious of the fact that Goethe has experienced a development the net result of which is a happy approach to greater artistic perfection. The style in which the monologue is written is exalted, melodious, virile. The iambics have a beauty, and are treated with a skill, that was unknown to Goethe until he had revised his *Iphigenie*, and rewritten it, in verse. There is nothing like it in the *Urfaust*. Delightful is the effect produced by having the animals on the land, the birds in the air, and the fish in the sea referred to as the brothers of men—somewhat as St. Francis of Assisi addressed them! Delightful also is the portrayal of nature during a storm which overturns the spruces, so that one hears the roaring and cracking of the falling trees. And finally, there is a delineation, in a serene and lofty style, of the moonlight, and the silvery figures of olden times which arise, in this soft illumination, before the mind of the dreaming soul!

There is no slight difference between the simple, naïve tone in the earlier erotic scene of the work, and the height of lyric eloquence to which it has now risen.

It was quite out of the question to portray anything more simple or familiar than the young girl who plucks the petals from the daisy and says: He loves me; He loves me not! But no one had availed himself of that theme previous to the days

of Goethe. It was the egg of Columbus; and its effect was incalculable. By this addition the field of art was extended.

## IV

It is no wonder that Goethe, down in the garden of the Villa Borghese, conceived of the Devil as a *northern* spectre, taken up as he was in Italy with figures from the world of Grecian legends. On his journey to Bologna, he saw a painting of St. Agathe which appealed to him as being so wholesome, so reassuring, so maidenly, that his own Iphigenie occurs to him. Curiously enough, he conceived the idea that he would like to read his poem to this St. Agathe, and have his own heroine say nothing whatsoever that would in any way offend her. Just at the time, however, that he voluntarily decided to continue his work on the Priestess among the Taurians, his fancy took a leap to one side: He abandoned the theme for the time being, and set forth to dream out a continuation of the action. The new drama was to be called *Iphigenie in Delphi*; its contents were to be as follows:

Filled with the hope that Orestes will succeed in bringing the Taurian image of Artemis back to Delphi, Electra consecrates in the temple the axe that has worked such fatal havoc in her home. A Greek arrives and informs her that he has accompanied Orestes and Pylades to Crimea, and seen the two friends led off to death. She breaks out in a violent passion; her madness seeks revenge. In the meantime Iphigenie, Orestes, and Pylades have come to Delphi. The Greek announces Iphigenie as

the Priestess who committed the murder. Thereupon she seizes the axe, she whose wild excitement is contrasted with Iphigenie's sacred calm, and would strike her sister to the earth, when a happy circumstance prevents this new horror from befalling the Atridean race.

Goethe had found the theme in the textbook ascribed to the Roman grammarian Hyginus, one of Emperor Augustus's serfs. According to Hyginus, Electra goes to Delphi in order to question the oracle concerning her brother's death after having received the false report of the sacrificial act in Tauris. When the message makes it appear that Iphigenie who has just arrived, is the murderer, she snatches a brand from the altar in order to put out her sister's eyes. Orestes interferes and the recognition scene takes place. There is, incidentally, a Greek tragedy on the same theme, probably by Sophocles. (In the year 1856, Friedrich Halm took up the subject once more and wrote a tragedy on it that was performed at the Burgtheater.)

Goethe never completed more than this loose sketch; not a line of the drama itself was ever written. There are, however, some valuable scenes of another antique drama the plan of which was laid in Palermo, and of still a third in Taormina. The latter was to be constructed on a totally different basis. It took shape in his mind while he was in Sicily where he was surrounded by reminiscences of the *Odyssey*. Of this he was, as it were, possessed for a while. It is a great pity that he never collected himself at any future time sufficiently to work it out. It was *Nausikaa*.

We can see what hindered him first and foremost

from completing this drama. For two weeks in succession he had thought incessantly of a theme from the *Odyssey*, which he wished at first to treat under another name, probably that of *Arete*. But one day he chanced to stroll into the public park at Palermo in order to ponder over and muse on his theme a little more. There it befell his genius, never capable of wooing a single theme for any length of time, that another subject opened up before him. He was profoundly impressed by the fact that many plants which he had been accustomed to see growing either in pots or behind the shelter of a hot-house were here growing freely and rapidly under the open sky. His old and naïve idea of the *Urpflanze*, not as an abstraction and simplification, but as an individual species, took hold of him. He resigned himself to search in the hope that here in this fragrant garden with all its manifold plant-life, he might find the *Urpflanze* itself. Botany won the day over poetry. As he himself says: The garden of Alcinous on the island of the Phaeacians disappeared and the world garden opened its gates before his eyes.

He nevertheless finished enough of his *Nausikaa* in Palermo and Taormina to give us an idea of the interest that would have attached to the completed plan. Nausikaa is the most beautiful maiden character in the *Odyssey*, shrewd, domestic, considerate, a true but primitive princess who does not consider herself above carrying her own father's and brother's linen to the laundry. She is conversant with life; she knows how to avoid malicious gossip; she can give the stranger a bit of advice that liberates. A tender, womanly interest in the stranger is indicated in the *Odyssey*, but in accordance with the

ancient conception of a seemly and aristocratic young maiden's bearing, it never for a moment transgresses the bounds of mere indication. She yearns for a bridegroom who is precisely like this man. Her father likewise, so long as the stranger has not disclosed his incognito, though he has shown himself in his true splendor, and has given abundant proof of his varied accomplishments. Up to this point, the father would gladly recognize him as a son-in-law. But as soon as Odysseus has mentioned his name, and as soon as it is made known that his wife is awaiting his arrival in her native city, this project is naturally abandoned. At his departure Nausikaa does not appear at all; she is not even referred to.

Goethe had an opportunity here to introduce a life of feeling from the modern point of view. For he had decided to have Odysseus (whom he persistently calls by his Latin name Ulysses, in accord with his inveterate custom), claim, by way of caution, that he was another individual, one of Odysseus's confederates, an unmarried man. Herein lies the first similarity between the severely tried and much travelled hero, and the famous wanderer disguised as merchant Möller. When Goethe depicted in Nausikaa a noble, much sought after maiden who had rejected various suitors, but whose soul is touched by the fate of this rare shipwrecked individual, there was a chance to show how her being underwent a transformation, and how her scruples about leading the stranger into the city of the Phaeacians was a premonition of her budding affection.

Nausikaa is grieved when the stranger wins the

favor of her brother, and obtains even the father's permission to return home, though the oracle has expressly forbidden such action. Nausikaa asks: What? The best, the most excellent man I ever met, the only one I can love, is to be taken away from me? Odysseus comes (just as in the *Odyssey*) to thank her for the kindness she has shown him. He is for her a breath from the great fresh sea with all its distant strands. She herself feels, on the island, as though she were a prisoner. Odysseus describes his home with its severe winter climate in contrast to her father's rich and luxurious garden (the climate of Weimar in contrast to that of Italy). The sight of Alcinous's garden (described by Homer), magnificent in every way, has the same effect on Odysseus that the scenery of Italy had on Goethe:

Ein weisser Glanz ruht über Land und Meer,  
Und duftend schwebt der Aether ohne Wolken.

Nausikaa allows us to catch a glimpse of her real emotions. Goethe puts some words in her mouth which in the *Odyssey* her father uses concerning Odysseus:

Du bist nicht von den Trüglichen,  
Wie viele Fremde kommen, die sich rühmen,  
Und glatte Worte sprechen, wo der Hörer  
Nichts Falsches ahnet und zuletzt, betrogen,  
Sie unvermuthet wieder scheiden sieht.  
Du bist ein Mann, ein zuverläss'ger Mann;  
Sinn und Zusammenhang hat deine Rede. Schön  
Wie eines Dichters Lied tönt sie dem Ohr  
Und füllt das Herz and reisst es mit sich fort.

Nausikaa struggles in hope and doubt: does the stranger love her, or does he not? She decides to

beseech her father and the other princes not to let him go. In the hall of Alcinous deliberations are being held bearing on the case: Shall the guest be permitted to return home? Nausikaa's brother arrives, and enthusiastically espouses the cause of the stranger.

Out of the one martial game in the *Odyssey*, Goethe has made many in all of which Odysseus proves to be in possession of the greatest skill. Just as in Homer, loose talk has aroused him and he has defeated all rivals. He is a hero. No one is his equal. The assembly is finally turned in his favor.

And then Nausikaa appears and confesses her love. It is decided to fulfill the stranger's plea with regard to Odysseus, but to persuade the stranger to remain, whereupon he is obliged to make himself known: "I am Odysseus." Since it is generally known that Penelope is awaiting him in Ithaca, and since the hour of separation is drawing near, Nausikaa does not permit herself to be seen. She feels a sense of shame. She wishes to die. Aversion and contempt are in store for her from her people. All the young men who wooed her so long in vain will take vengeance on her (just as in the little Swiss drama all wished to take vengeance on Bäte-ly). Nausikaa tells Odysseus that he must not judge her falsely. All of this is his own work, the result of the untruthfulness in which he wrapped himself. He wishes to correct what has happened, offers Nausikaa Telemachus as a bridegroom, wishes to return and bring his son. The two young people are then supposed to find each other. The father, Alcinous, is willing to accept the proposal.

But Nausikaa has already thrown herself into the sea and died.

In the discussion of this plan, Goethe traces every clue and motive back to himself. There was, he says, nothing in this work which I could not have depicted from my own life. I myself was on a journey, I was running the risk of bringing on affections which, though their end was not tragic, were capable of becoming quite harmful. I myself was in the same situation, so far from home as to be able to become interested in painting with living colors distant occurrences, travelling adventures and incidents. I myself was exposed to the danger of being regarded by the young as a demi-god and by the mature as a braggart. I was in danger of receiving many an undeserved bit of praise and of meeting with many an unanticipated hindrance. He emphasizes the fact that his personal situation made the material so attractive to him that he dreamt over it the greater part of his stay in Sicily. In accordance with his custom, however, he hesitated about writing it down until the mood had, so to speak, evaporated.

It is most reasonable to assume that when Goethe sketched the figure of Nausikaa, he had, among other models, his new acquaintance, the above mentioned Principessa, the sister of Filangieri in mind. She was a Princess like Nausikaa. At the very first meeting she invited him to visit her. It so happened that she occupied a palace so magnificently fitted out, so splendid, and so full of bespangled flunkies that Goethe said he felt, on entering it, "like the Sultan in Wieland's fairy tale." She begs him at once to sit down beside her; she asks him to accompany her to Sorrento, where she has a large estate and where

the mountain air and the divine view will cure him of all philosophy, smoothe out the wrinkles in his brow, and "put him to shame before he leaves for having preferred stony and desolate Sicily to her." Concerning her brother the jurist, she always uses, in Goethe's presence, the humorous expression: The brave man! He takes an awful lot of trouble. I have already said to him quite frequently: "If you people make new laws you simply cause us new inconvenience in that we have to devise new ways of transgressing these laws. We have long since learned how to evade the old ones."

Naturally the similarity between the model and the figure in the poetic work extends no farther than the general situation; it does not reach as far as the character itself which is fundamentally different, almost the direct opposite. Nausikaa is the Greek, the Southern Gretchen. Like her she is a combination of naïveté and exaltedness. The maidenly, reserved bearing is overcome in her case too. Without considering the consequences, she gives in to the longings that fill her. In the presence of Odysseus she praises his speech; it as beautiful as the song of the poet. Gretchen says about the same: *Und seiner Rede Zauberfluss.*

We have a similar situation in Goethe's novelette entitled *Der Mann von fünfzig Jahren*, where the elderly man is loved by his grand-daughter, though she was really intended for his son..

The Major remarks in the novelette: "I would never have believed her capable of anything so unnatural." To this the young woman's mother replies that that is not unnatural in the case of a

young girl. In the same vein we have, among the fragments in *Nausikaa*, these words:

Und immer ist der Mann ein junger Mann,  
Der einem jungen Weibe wohlgefällt.

In despair over being unable to compete with Homer, Goethe alcoved the plan for ever and a day.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### STUDIES IN BOTANY; METAMORPHOSIS OF PLANTS REVISION OF *Tasso*—RETURN TO WEIMAR: PROFOUND DISCONTENT

IT was during the study of Italian plant forms, a new field for Goethe, that he had a number of original and valuable experiences pertaining to the dependence of growth upon light, air, and soil. And while searching for the *Urpflanze* (in the public gardens of Padua and Palermo), he arrived at those general ideas concerning the structure of plant forms that were soon to be embodied in his brochure on the metamorphosis of plants.

Initially he was so ill-informed that he firmly believed he would find the *Urpflanze* among other plants, just as though nature worked out her models until they stood in among other specimens in the same way that a model from Paris stands in the shop window along with others cut after this particular Parisian design. But four weeks pass by; he feels, in the presence of nature, that he is a creative spirit; he knows that the *Urpflanze* is his product and not the product of nature.

In Naples he writes: "The *Urpflanze* is the most truly remarkable creation in the world, and nature itself will come in time to begrudge me this crea-

tion." Observation has taught him that the plant brings forth the most varied and variegated sorts of forms simply by modifying one single organ—the leaf.

From this point of view, the formation of the leaf is a propagation which differs from the propagation that takes place in the simultaneous formation of fruit and flower only in the matter of frequent repetition. And by concluding further that a plant, even a tree, which we visualise as an individual entity, consists after all of separate parts that resemble each other and the whole, he approaches the secret of organic individuality. He was in truth prevented from penetrating it fully by the mere fact that the microscope did not clear up the life of the cell until after his day. He perceives, however, not simply so far as the plant is concerned, that the seemingly indivisible separate beings consist of a "collection of several details," as he expresses it, but that the same applies to animals and men as well.

When Goethe began his botanical studies, botanists everywhere stood under the direct influence of Linné; they were exclusively engaged in systematology. Linné had stamped microscopists and physiologists as mere dilettantists; he had also caused the defection from the investigations bearing on the anatomy and physiology of plants which had been carried on even in the seventeenth century. Linné's system was artificial to the extent that it divided the plant world according to external characteristics, such as the number and position of the stamens. With him and his disciples it was a question of recognizing and separating as many species as possible from each other.

All of Goethe's original investigations in the neighborhood of Weimar, concerning the growth of trees and mosses, or concerning plants in his own garden, had been undertaken from Linné's point of view. Goethe took Linné's writings along with him on his excursions, and classified whatever he found according to the Linnéan system, just as the botanists did in adjacent Jena. When he went to Karlsbad, he even took along with him a gardener's son from Jena, who was especially interested in giving plants their correct Latin names. He felt that the young man's assistance might be of substantial value to him.

Though Linné's system, as we have said, was artificial, he himself emphasized the necessity of a natural system, according to which plants would be grouped after their real and peculiar characteristics. French botanists, and among the Germans Batsch and Büttner in Jena, were planning to draw up such a system. Jean Jacques Rousseau, who had influenced young Wolfgang as a poet, also gave Goethe the botanist not a few suggestions. Linné and his successors taught, moreover, that the species have never changed since their creation. Goethe on the contrary saw that in certain families, such as the gentians, each individual specimen had the same external characteristics, while there were others, roses for example, in which the individual specimens differed so much from each other, partly even in the case of the decisive marks, that it was impossible to decide to which species the individual specimen must belong. In other words, he found all sorts of transitional forms in the species that were fixed according to Linné, so that his belief in the existence of

unalterably determined and unchangeable species was shaken.

So much the more because he had studied plants not in herbariums but on his walks out in the open; and he had observed with his own eyes the effect of external influences on the forms of plants. The same species looked quite different, depending upon whether it grew in the field or in the valley, in the sun or in the shade, whether it was exposed to cold or protected, whether it was richly watered, or whether it received but little water.

In Italy his botanical belief was corroborated and his botanical heresy was strengthened. Even in Padua he discovered that under the warmer suns and the milder winter the flora as a whole took on a quite different stamp from what it had in the North. And even in Padua he observed (while studying a fan palm in the botanical garden of the city) a complete series of transitions between the simple leaf form and the compound fan leaf. He saw that the parts of plants developed differently under different sorts of influences, and that a comparison between the various plant species could be undertaken with the idea of arriving at a comprehensive point of view in the plant world.

Though he used the microscope but little, he did not adhere to the finished plant. In Rome he saw how various plants sprouted and kept up their growth until they acquired the finished form. The above mentioned Reiffenstein succeeded, moreover, in persuading him to make the attempt to see to what extent parts of plants that had been cut off would take root. He also studied and made drawings of abnormally developed plants, bred and ob-

served the plant forms that arose through the interference of man or from external causes, such as the bite of an insect.

It was then not as the result of momentary inspiration but of prolonged persistence that he approached his theory concerning the transformation of plants; and it was with the greatest difficulty that he had it published. Göschen refused to print the little monograph which in later editions takes up 32 pages. The essay was published in 1790 by Ettinger in Gotha under the German-sounding title: *J. W. v. Goethe, Herzoglich Sachsen-Weimarischen Geheimrats Versuch, die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären.*

With Goethe it was a question of establishing, by reference to numerous transitional forms, the fundamental thesis that all the different parts of the plant, except the stem, are transformed leaves: On the tiny insignificant cotyledons, after the form is pulled apart, there follow the undeveloped leaf blades, and then by renewed contraction the calyx, and then by separation the corolla, and then by renewed contraction the stamens and pistils, and finally as a result of the latest development the fruit. Goethe raises the question in this connection as to what causes the lateral development and contraction of the form. His own theory is that during the growth of the plant and the in-filtering of the sap into the parts that lie higher, these saps gradually become more finely filtered and thereby changed. Modern science has not agreed with him, in so far as the change of material does not come about so simply as he in his day could suppose. But it has agreed with him in the essentials in so far as he understood

that the change of form of plants in general must be dependent upon the change of material.

The little work, to this very day the basis of scientific botany, evoked a smile on the part of his contemporaries and seemed to them to be a queer delusion. Is it possible that a poet is botching around in science! This essay of just a few pages, concerning which Auguste Saint-Hilaire said that it belongs to those few books that do not simply make their author immortal but that they themselves are immortal, was received with the sympathetic lament that such a great talent could have so completely got off its right and proper course. Professional men shook their heads, while scholars in Goethe's immediate vicinity denied him the recognition they otherwise distributed with open hands. As early as 1791, Schiller was made a member of the Academy of Science in Erfurt; Goethe was not accorded this modest distinction until 1811, or twenty years later.

## I

It was Goethe's original intention to take *Torquato Tasso*, which, according to the preliminary outline of the contents of Goethe's collective works in the first edition (1786), was to have only two acts, along with him to Italy and revise it while there. But he did not succeed in doing this, though he worked at it with marked perseverance. While occupation with *Tasso* stretches out over more than nine years of his life (March, 1780—July, 1789), the revision alone engaged his attention during the last three of these years.

What the Duke says to Tasso, then, concerning

his work on *La Gerusalemme Liberata* applies remarkably well to Goethe himself:

Er kann nicht enden, kann nicht fertig werden,  
Er ändert stets, rückt langsam weiter vor,  
Steht wieder still.

In 1786, Goethe resumes work on the subject, in February, 1787, he thinks of laying it aside for a while so that he can devote his time to *Iphigenie in Delphi*, works on it nevertheless in February and March, and then puts it to one side in Rome in order to have time to complete *Egmont*. He writes even in February, 1788, that *Tasso* must be revised, for as it is written it is of no account. In March he has his plan complete. It never occurs to him for a moment to go to Ferrara, which he had seen for only one day, October 16, 1786, and found nauseating. In the beautiful gardens of Florence, during the months of April and May, he elaborated those parts of the drama which then attracted him most, was again seized with misgivings, found the first two acts a failure, saw that they must be revised, returned home with the work unfinished, and wrote in February, 1789, to the Duke that *Tasso* was growing like an orange tree, very slowly. But by April he had advanced so far that he could "read" the drama to the Duchess Luise only by narrating the three scenes that were still lacking. He finished it finally at the same time that the Bastille was being stormed in Paris.

If there be one event with which the drama has no connection other than that of contemporaneity, it is the French Revolution. This is a drama which, in contrast to *Egmont*, has no folk scenes, and whose

air, however fresh and clean it may be, can be characterized as court air.

But in saying this there is no intention whatsoever of making a disparaging remark concerning the drama, which is caviar for the multitude, but a wonderful work of art, not exactly as a stage drama but as a bit of poetry. There is very little stage life in it, especially because it is so difficult to find actors who can measure up to the demands made by the leading figures. But it abounds in knowledge of men and wisdom in general. This world knows of but few dramas that contain such a large number of speeches that have become winged words, standing phrases, quoted again and again, in season and out of season, rightly and wrongly. Here are a few examples :

Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,  
Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt.

It is possible to question the truth of the remark, since many a talent needs to be unfolded through many-sided influence; but it is impossible to doubt that the remark seemed to the age in which it was made, and to posterity as well, quite striking as a proverb.

#### The sentence

Doch haben all Götter sich versammelt,  
Geschenke seiner Wiege darzubringen,  
Die Gratien sind leider ausgeblieben

is supposed to stamp in Tasso's mouth Antonio, and has during the past century, in round numbers, been applied to many an individual other than Antonio.

The same is true of the sentence that characterizes Leonore:

Und wenn sie auch  
Die Absicht hat, den Freunden wohlzuthun,  
So fühlt man Absicht, und man ist verstimmt.

There have been countless applications of Leonore's remarks on Antonio and Tasso as the seeming antipodes of each other, as men who appear mutually hostile though they should be mutually complementary. There have been countless instances where two men, Goethe and Schiller for example, have been kept apart for years and years by misunderstandings and apparently contrary dispositions until at last we learn that they are simply opposite poles of the same fundamental being:

Zwei Männer sind's, ich hab' es lang' gefühlt,  
Die darum Feinde sind, weil die Natur  
Nicht *einen* Mann aus ihnen beiden formte.

The difficulty in completely understanding men, men whose inmost nature we imagine we have thoroughly penetrated, because we have seen them and observed them for years, is expressed in this caustic remark by Tasso:

Die Menschen kennen sich einander nicht.  
Nur die Galeerensklaven kennen sich,  
Die eng an *eine* Bank geschmiedet keuchen.

Tasso's remarks concerning the poet have been repeated time out of mind:

Und wenn der Mensch in seiner Qual verstummt,  
Gab mir ein Gott zu sagen, was ich leide.

Students of Shakespeare will recall that he almost invariably speaks with contempt of authors and poets. Those in *Caesar* and *Timon* play a pitiable rôle. It was Shakespeare who originated the depreciatory conception of the writing individual as contrasted with the man of deeds; he has the scholar and poet fare ill in comparison with the hero. From Shakespeare this idea was handed down to Goethe and his brothers in Apollo from the time of *Sturm und Drang*.

Where, a generation later, the Romanticists in Germany as in France and in the North, outdid themselves in self-idolization, saw the poet in their creations become now a knight with a golden harp, now nothing less than the shepherd and chieftain of the people (Victor Hugo), in the mind and works of the young Goethe the poet becomes a half ridiculous, half contemptible figure.

When Götz von Berlichingen complains that "this lazy leisure simply does not suit me," Elizabeth says to him: "Then finish your autobiography which you have begun!" Götz replies: "Ah! Writing is busy *idleness*. While I am writing about what I have already done, I am vexed at the loss of time in which I might have done more."—In the same spirit Liebtraut says in Götz concerning him who invented the game of chess that he "was too *active* to become a scholar." In Klinger's *Otto* we have the same low grading of those who write history as contrasted with those who make history. He says in this connection: "Writers of history must have very little to do, since they merely write up what the others actually accomplish." In *Julius von Tarent*, by Schiller's predecessor Leisewitz, we read: "Who-

ever can be a hero knows but little about history. There is the *idler* Julius; he is familiar with so many brilliant historical examples. Had he been a man of real ability he would himself have become a hero." And in his *Räuber* (1781) Schiller says after him, through Karl Moor: "O fie, fie on this emasculated century which can only ruminant on the events of the past . . . I am disgusted with this ink-wasting century when I read in my Plutarch of great men."

But of the various writing people, it is especially the poets who are looked down upon. On this account Admet says in *Götter, Helden und Wieland*: "Euripides is also a poet and I have never in my life held poets to be more than they actually are. But he is a brave fellow and my countryman." The poet is then the symbol of weakness. One whines "like a sick poet" (*Götz*). The poet is a poor devil who deserves sympathy. Thus we read in Schiller's *Räuber*: "Poor poets, who do not have a pair of shoes to put on because they have sent their only pair to be mended" — apparently a reminiscence from the life of Corneille.

In Goethe's prologue to *Neueröffnetes moralisch-politisches Puppenspiel* (1774), he derides with unmistakable bitterness the mutual envy and jealousy of the poets:

Dringt Einer sich dem Andern vor,  
Deutet Einer dem Andern ein Eselsohr.

Herum, herauf, hinan, hinein—  
Das muss ein Schwarm Autoren sein.

At this period of his life the poet is always outdistanced and outshone by the hero. In Schiller's

*Fiesco* (1783), a painting is brought to the leading character. He throws it to one side with the words:

You boast with the heat of the poet, with the impotent puppet plays of the fancy that know not heart and that are strangers to such deeds as warm the fancy into other deeds. You throw tyrants on the canvas while you yourself are a miserable slave.

In contrast to this, the conception of the artist in *Torquato Tasso* is altogether sympathetic and profoundly appreciative. Goethe has established the bond that exists between his hero and his poet in a quite exquisite manner :

So bindet der Magnet durch seine Kraft  
Das Eisen mit dem Eisen fest zusammen,  
Wie gleiches Streben Held und Dichter bindet.  
Homer vergass sich selbst; sein ganzes Leben  
War der Betrachtung zweier Männer heilig,  
Und Alexander in Elysium  
Eilt den Achill und den Homer zu suchen.

There is no doubt but that the poet in the prose sketch of *Torquato Tasso* was a leading character the significance of whose calling was emphasized in all probability just as strongly as it is in the finished drama. But where the vocation is there measured on a one-arm lever, in the finished classical drama in verse it is measured on a lever of two arms. The worth of the poet and the man of affairs, or more accurately speaking the statesman, are set off against each other. It is not until this has been done that one feels that the author of the drama was able to rise superior to his own life-work, not in the spirit of immature depreciation, such as we witnessed fifteen or sixteen years earlier in his life, but by way of dispassionately showing the poet where his real

sphere of activity lies, and what rôle he plays among other mortals whose existence is also justified.

At this time Goethe himself was no longer merely the poet of former days. For quite a while he too had been struggling with practical questions. As a poet he had simply met with cordial opposition from the vindicators of state routine, vindicators whom he was obliged to disarm, not by defiance nor by referring to the favor he enjoyed at the hand of his Prince, but by self-control and persistent industry.

Tasso's nature has two fundamental traits: he is sensitive and he is impulsive.

Thin-skinned in his feelings as he is, he acts without previous deliberation and follows an impulse which knows no inner restraint.

As to how *sensitive* he is, we see before our own eyes from the rapture he experiences on receiving the wreath from fair hands as a reward for the completion of his great poem. He does not see how he is to live from that hour on. He asks the Princess to remove the wreath from his head; it is scorching his hair, it is burning the thoughts from his brain like a sun-stroke, it is setting his blood in a fever. This is the height of exaltation from which he falls at the arrival of Antonio with his glacial coldness and the manifestation of unreserved displeasure.

As to how *impulsive* he is, we see for the first time when, under the impression of the cordial words spoken to him by the Princess as to how his great poem has *won* the reader, intoxicated with joy, he hopes to see his love for her requited. He picks a quarrel with the cool Antonio whom he fills with antipathy through the offer of friendship and the request of friendship in return. And we receive an

even deeper impression of this feeling when, immediately after, suffering from Antonio's reserve and the doubt of his merits, which the latter in his envy and aversion allows us to catch sight of, he refers, not merely to his ability and the reward for his ability, but even goes so far as to allow himself to be dragged into a state of actual hostility. He draws his sword on Antonio in the ducal palace, and this despite the fact that, according to an old and universal law, such conduct is considered a crime and sure to be met with severe punishment.

The Prince, who understands him and pities him, contents himself with inflicting upon him a harmless arrest in his own rooms; but to Tasso's sensitive nature this is an injustice that shrieks to heaven. When an honest attempt is made on all sides to adjust and straighten out what has happened, his impulsive temperament once more robs him of his power in the drama: he takes the demure and cultured Princess into his arms and presses her to his bosom. Also, he is so imprudent and uncautious as to commit this unconventional act in the presence of two or three witnesses, to whom the deed is not exactly criminal but which, the circumstances being as they are, decided Tasso's fate and isolated the unfortunate mortal forever.

The other traits which show Tasso's sickly nature we experience only through the remarks of Antonio; they do not stand out especially clear in the picture. An Elizabethan dramatist would have made us eye witnesses to all of these oddities which Goethe took from the two Italian biographies that he used: Tasso cannot be temperate in food and drink, he fills his stomach with sweet and spiced things, never

puts water in his wine, and disobeys the injunctions of his physician in general. Since Goethe does not wish to have us regard Tasso as mentally diseased, and since he himself scarcely believed that he was of unsound mind, he explains his wild dreams as being the result of his irregular life. Tasso suffered from an obsession that he was surrounded by enviers, enemies, and persecutors. He complains to the Duke of broken locks, intercepted letters, attempts on his life, and so on, but when the cases are investigated nothing can be found.

In reality, Tasso, like Rousseau and Strindberg, suffered from a distinct mania that he was being persecuted. But this does not exclude the fact that in life he often had, and in the drama he has justifiable reason, for suspicion. Leonore von Sanvitale, who tries to get him away from Ferrara in order to enjoy his society herself, is, despite her tenderness, by no means always honorable toward him. She gives him an entirely false picture of the feelings of the Princess, conceals from him the love that the Princess really cherishes for him, and does her share to deprive him of the equilibrium he sorely needs.

The manner in which the various persons who come in close contact with Tasso endeavor, for good reasons but in vain, to persuade him to abandon and forget his morbid introspection is unusually beautiful in itself; and it is elaborated with the finesse of a born artist.

The Duke makes it clear to him that Fate digs many an abyss around about us; but the deepest abyss of all is found in our own heart. He adds in a spirit of paternal kindness

Ich bitte dich, entreisse dich dir selbst.

To this Tasso replies with a fascinating, ingenious and yet evasive simile; one that quite transcends what the Duke himself has in mind. He claims that without brooding, and without the writing of poetry he cannot live. He contends that it is consequently just as idle to forbid his participation in these things as it is to forbid the silkworm from spinning, though it spins the precious web from out of its own self, and in this way spins itself to death, only to lie at last enshrouded in its own yarn as if in its coffin.

Antonio replies in words that are admirably chosen, and as profound as they are true:

Es ist wohl angenehm, sich mit sich selbst  
Beschäftigen, wenn es nur so nützlich wäre.  
Inwendig lernt kein Mensch sein Innerstes  
Erkennen; denn er misst nach eignem Mass  
Sich bald zu klein, und leider oft zu gross.  
Der Mensch erkennt sich nur im Menschen, nur  
Das Leben lehret Jedem, was er sei.

Nor are Antonio's observations any less to the point when he says that there are times when Tasso sinks within himself as if all things had found lodgment in his own heart and the external world had completely vanished. But then suddenly, just as if a mine had been discharged, he endeavors to seize control of all he had so recently cast off and away; he endeavors to obtain in a moment things that can be secured only after years of preparation. Goethe has Leonore use an expression concerning him which he himself will use in time concerning Reinhold Lenz: He harms no one but himself.

Antonio, who perchance confuses the reader and spectator somewhat on his first appearance in so far as his conduct seems to be determined wholly and

entirely by envy and jealousy, grows in our estimation as the drama proceeds until at last he stands face to face with Tasso as a picture of mature manhood over against uncontrolled youth, as the picture of an individual sincere in his intentions, reasonable in his guidance, and resolute where he was formerly vacillating.

As is usual in Goethe's works, the heroine is fully as attractive as the hero. Where Faust and Egmont allow themselves to be loved, Tasso, like Werther, is deeply and inconstantly in love. Where Gretchen and Clärchen love without measure and without regard, Goethe has depicted in the Princess a noble and dignified woman who loves fervently and fully but whose love recognizes limits and whose breeding demands, not simply that morals and customs be respected, but that rank and standing be taken into consideration. Where Leonore von Sanvitale, with all her kindness for Tasso, clings to him nevertheless in womanly vanity, takes pleasure in seeing her own being reflected in his mind, reads herself into his poems and out of them, delights in the renown that accrues to a woman who stands in such intimate relations to a distinguished personality, and wishes to see him honored so that she herself may be the more honored, Leonore von Este loves him unconditionally though, as has been said, not boundlessly.

She has an edifying effect upon him. She teaches him what is permissible and what can be presumed. She makes clear to him the significance of dignified womanhood. Like the assassins of the Middle Ages, he falls back upon nature's call to mortal man: *Erlaubt ist, was gefällt.* She, distrustful of the natural state of man, and having no delusions about a

Golden Age, adopts as her slogan: *Erlaubt ist, was sich ziemt.* She is conceived of in lofty fashion. She is a disciple of Plato. She gives expression to generalities that are tenable. Sincerely endeavoring to keep her adorer within certain safe limits and at the same time retain her own self-assertion and self-possession, she posits this thesis:

Willst du genau erfahren, was sich ziemt,  
So frage nur bei edlen Frauen an  
. . . . .

There is no escaping the fact that to the modern mind she seems to be writing poetry for albums. In her being is a basic portion of resignation. She no more believes in happiness than in the Golden Age. "Happy! Who is happy?" she asks. During the years of her approaching maturity she had been in ill health; she had been obliged to form that philosophy of life which sees good in pain and something beneficial in distress. She is reserved: It is impossible for her even to approach her own brother in Tasso's behalf; impossible for her to ask Antonio to spare Tasso; to become reconciled to him and with him. She is wont to carry out her desires in perfect stillness, personally, without appealing or applying to anyone else. She wishes to use her maternal inheritance in caring for Tasso, he himself being such an impractical economist.

It is consequently all the more effective and pleasing when this reticent, demure, resigned and temperate young woman, on being confronted with Tasso's actual departure, falls into semi-despair, confesses her love for him, shudders at the feeling of imminent loneliness, and portrays the hope she

has of seeing him in the morning, the joy of the day when she can associate with him, and that quiet, glowing feeling which gave to each day a full and rich meaning:

Die Hoffnung, ihn zu sehen, füllt nicht mehr  
Den kaum erwachten Geist mit froher Sehnsucht;  
Mein erster Blick hinab in unsre Gärten  
Sucht ihn vergebens in dem Thau der Schatten.  
Wie schön befriedigt fühlte sich der Wunsch,  
Mit ihm zu sein an jedem heitern Abend!  
Wie mehrte sich im Umgang das Verlangen,  
Sich mehr zu kennen, mehr sich zu verstehen!  
Und täglich stimmte das Gemüth sich schöner  
Zu immer reinern Harmonien auf.

This sort of love, which the more plethoric and quite demure Leonore compares to the quiet light of the moon, is, for all that, true love such as can easily be developed in women who, though not intensely sensual, are nevertheless emotional and reflective. Max Müller once upon a time published a little book, entitled *Deutsche Liebe*, on the mutual love between a young man and a sickly young German Princess (a situation similar to the one experienced by his father, the well known German poet, Wilhelm Müller). This portrayal corresponds essentially to the strong but resigned feelings on the part of the Princess in Goethe's drama, who, it is perfectly plain, is only apparently an Italian Princess from the Inquisition at its worst, and who, it is also plain, is thoroughly German and represents the short-lived period of humanity.

She is just as human as she is German; and the same can be said of the other characters of the drama. The one feature of the work that is not

human, but one of civilization's artificialities, is the conflict; and here lies the rickety spot in this otherwise rare bit of dramatic poetry. That a young poet should challenge his opponent to a duel, and that in a place which for conventional reasons is considered inviolate, and that the gifted artist longs to embrace a Princess whom he loves and by whom he is loved—these are purely artificial sins; they are merely an attempt to bombard artificial boundaries, which, just at the time of the completion of *Torquato Tasso*, were being turned upside down and inside out, in the main country of Europe as then constituted, by another type of catapulting violence that was poles removed from the violence that had characterized Goethe's juvenile *Sturm und Drang*.

## II

Goethe had originally planned to return home from Italy by way of Frankfort in order to greet his mother. Nothing came of this. On March 18, 1788, he writes quite cold heartedly from Rome to Karl August, stating that he intends to return to Weimar by way of Lindau, Augsburg and Nuremberg: "I have already deprived my mother of the hope of seeing me on my return journey and have tried to console her by referring her to another occasion."

The last time he had seen her, after a lapse of four years, was for just a short while in 1779; he was then on a journey to Switzerland. His stay in Frankfort made such a slight impression upon him that he never even mentioned it in the description of his travels. Nine years had now passed by during

which he had never laid eyes on his noble mother. She had lost her daughter and was living entirely in and for her son. Even after his father's death in 1782, Wolfgang felt neither impulse nor desire to pay her a visit. She was living all alone in the empty house and not until now did she have an opportunity to get something out of her own life. From 1784 to 1788 she was quite taken up with the actor Unzemann. On his leaving Frankfort she was moved, even distressed. She never went to Weimar where she would have been accepted and welcomed according to her just deserts. She kept up a correspondence with Anna Amalie for four years. When Goethe was in Cassel in 1783, he could not be prevailed upon to take the short journey to Frankfort, though his companion, the young Fritz von Stein, asked him to do so. (This young man lived two years later for some time with Frau Aja.) From Eisenach Goethe writes to Charlotte von Stein, 1784: "They tell me I could reach Frankfort in thirty-one hours, but I have not the most fleeting thought of going there. You have so drawn my nature to yours that there is no other nerve left in me for the simplest duties of the heart." A little later on he says: "I have neglected my Fatherland and my mother for your sake." *Waterland* for *Waterstadt* is Frankfort dialect to the very close of the eighteenth century.

Not until 1792, as a companion of the Duke during his participation in the campaign in France, did Goethe casually see his mother whom he, after the fashion of man, had set aside for this cold and hot coquette who completely dominated his existence for so long. And of his paternal city as such he thought only with coldness and indifference. As a

resident of Weimar he not only declined, in 1792, Frankfort's polite offer to appoint him *Ratsherr* in the place of his deceased uncle on his mother's side; he also offended the town of his birth by renouncing at last his rights of citizenship in order to avoid a city tax incurred by becoming a citizen of Frankfort.

In two different places, Goethe has given consonous expression to the mood that came over him when, after an absence of over a year and a half in Italy, he returned home to Weimar: *Zur Morphologie. Glückliches Ereignis* (1817), and *Biographische Einzelheiten. Erste Bekanntschaft mit Schiller*.

He had returned to Germany thoroughly saturated with the natural scenery of southern Italy and the monuments of Rome, wholly filled with the new artistic canons that had transformed his very nature. He strove without reserve after pure, clarified beauty, after rigid, simple form. In Germany he found not merely the young generation, but all those who could lay claim to literary interests, standing where he had stood about fifteen years ago. In this situation there was, to be sure, nothing remarkable. The reading public cannot keep pace with those men who, in a given country, open up new artistic ways and determine the tastes that shall prevail. But it surprised him and discouraged him. He had hoped for success with his *Iphigenie* and his *Egmont*; for he had once had success with his *Götz* and his *Werther*. They made no impression; they aroused no favorable comment; they evoked disappointment; and the author's disappointment was the keenest.

He writes: "After my return from Italy, where

I had sought to perfect myself along the line of a more pronounced definiteness and purity with regard to the varied phases of art, unconcerned as to what had taken place in the mean time in Germany, I found the works of the younger poets, and those of the older as well, standing in high repute. Among these, unfortunately, were the very ones that were especially obnoxious to me. I mention only Heinse's *Ardinghello* and Schiller's *Räuber*. The former was always distasteful to me, because it tries to ennoble and embellish sensuality and dubious ways of thinking with regard to plastic art; the latter because a forceful but immature talent had poured out in it the very ethical and theatrical paradoxes of which I had endeavored to purge myself; and he had emptied them on to the Fatherland in torrents unabated.

"The tumult which this awakened, the applause that was so generally accorded these bizarre lucubrations, by refined ladies of the Court as well as by blatant students, startled me: I had a feeling that my exertions had been wasted. The themes for the development of which I had trained myself seemed to have been set aside; my methods of education had apparently been rejected . . . Fancy my condition! I had been trying to find and nourish the purest views, and here I was, squeezed in between Ardinghello and Franz Moor."

He continues with a portrayal of the aversion he felt toward Schiller's revelling in liberty and self-determination, after the fashion of Kant, and because of Schiller's ingratitude toward great Mother Nature, who had never treated him favorably. He was always and ever contrasting liberty with nature:

"Instead of considering nature as independent, as creating from the deepest to the highest, according to law, he took it merely from a few simple, human, empirical ideas of naturalness." Such a remark as the following from Schiller's treatise entitled *Ueber Anmuth und Würde* made a quite depressing effect on Goethe: "Out of animal figures and forms, it is only nature that speaks, liberty never." As though there were a liberty outside of nature! As if it were possible to precede nature by an *only!*

This is the status of Goethe at this juncture of his career. All had turned away from him because he worshipped truth and beauty without regard to public taste and public usages. The great German public regarded him in the light of an apostate from the cause of his youth. But so much the more unalterable did he continue to remain in his adoration of nature, and his artistic ideals; so much the more vigorously did he determine to follow his course without making a shadow of a concession to the Germans. Up to this point he had not concerned himself to any marked degree with his readers; now he began to despise them.

From now on we note that tendency in him to which he gave expression, as late as 1816, in a letter to Merck. He said:

Die lieben Deutschen kenn' ich schon; erst schweigen sie;  
dann mäkeln sie; dann besiegen sie; dann bestehlen und  
verschweigen sie.

It had at last become clear to him that he was never to enjoy universal popularity; it did not lie in his nature.

The Duke alone was cordial toward him, and ap-

preciative of him. In accordance with the poet's wish, he exempted him from now on from all work, as a minister, that was really foreign to his true vocation. Goethe retained only the supervision of the institutions of art and science, with especial reference to the theatre in Weimar and the University in Jena.

He returned from Italy on June 18, 1788. Less than a month later, on July 12, a young working girl from Bertuch's flower factory, Christiane Sophie Vulpius, handed him, in his garden, the above mentioned petition. She pleased him then and there; he pleased her then and there. It was a case of love at first sight; it was markedly different from that of the Princess in *Tasso*. It was evoked by the arrow of Cupid rather than by that of Amor. It was no high-born love; but it was serious, enduring, natural, and innocent. Nothing could afford more reliable proof of the tenuous superficiality of the refinement and culture of the best society in Weimar at that time than the outcry that was raised when this union became known. The really modest women, from the Duchess down, were scandalized; the less modest paraded a virile contempt; the men were either excited or amused. Poor Christiane! She belonged (and there are very few women who can say the same thing) her whole life long to just one man. But she was reviled like a minx. Goethe himself encountered the solemn disapproval that is meted out to a man whose conduct is unbecoming.

Karl August and Herder were the only men in Weimar who were not offended: It simply did not lie in the Duke's nature to moralize on an erotic irregularity; and Herder, though a preacher, had

not lost the liberality of his youth. Goethe's mother was the only woman who viewed the case as a perfectly normal and harmless affair. She would naturally have preferred to see her son married to a pretty, domestic young woman from Frankfort, but she was far too human to be angry at her son because he had gone contrary to a social rule, or to condemn his new friend.

She writes to Christiane as soon as her relation to Goethe became established, and after having sent her some little presents. The birth of August won her affection completely. With the innate lawlessness, incidentally, of a woman, she persisted in spelling his name "Augst." In the letters to her son she calls Christiane now "Dein Liebgen," now "Deine Freundin," and now "Dein Bettschatz." Here is the beginning of her first letter to Christiane:

That the things I sent you have caused you joy is very agreeable to me—keep them as a little token from the mother of the one you love and esteem, and who is really worthy of love and esteem.

She signs this letter, "Ihre Freundin Goethe." In another letter, to her son, written in January, 1795, she enthusiastically thanks him for his *Wilhelm Meister*, the reminiscences of which from his childhood, the puppet theatre and the rest, have given her especially keen delight, "so that she felt thirty years younger." She closes the letter in this blunt, straightforward way:

One thing more! The continuation of *Wilhelm* will not be put off so long—for I have not yet had it bound—don't

let a person wait so long for the rest of it—for I am curious about it. Good-bye! Kiss little Augst for me—also your bedfellow.

Your faithful Mother,

GOETHE.

END OF VOLUME ONE



